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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE RED PATH. A Narrative. *In preparation*

SELWYN & BLOUNT

Memories of Childhood
:: and Other Poems ::

By

JOHN FREEMAN

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PART I

THE WAKERS

The joyous morning ran and kissed the grass
And drew his fingers through her sleeping hair,
  And cried, "Before thy flowers are well awake
  Rise, and the lingering darkness from thee shake.

"Before the daisy and the sorrel buy
Their brightness back from that close-folding night,
  Come, and the shadows from thy bosom shake,
  Awake from thy thick sleep, awake, awake!"

Then the grass of that mounded meadow stirred
Above the Roman bones that may not stir
  Though joyous morning whispered, shouted, sang:
  The grass stirred as that happy music rang.

O, what a wondrous rustling everywhere!
The steady shadows shook and thinned and died,
  The shining grass flashed brightness back for brightness,
  And sleep was gone, and there was heavenly lightness.

As if she had found wings, light as the wind,
The grass flew, bent with the wind, from east to west,
  Chased by one wild grey cloud, and flashing all
  Her dews for happiness to hear morning call. . . .

But even as I stopped out the brightness dimmed,
I saw the fading edge of all delight.
  The sober morning waked the drowsy herds,
  And there was the old scolding of the birds.

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

To

MARJORY

I

CHILDHOOD CALLS

COME over, come over the deepening river,
Come over again the dark torrent of years,
Come over, come back where the green leaves quiver,
And the lilac still blooms and the grey sky clears.

Come, come back to the everlasting garden,
To that green heaven, and the blue heaven above.
Come back to the time when time brought no burden,
And love was unconscious, knowing not love.

II

THE ANSWER

O, MY feet have worn a track
Deep and old in going back.
Thought released turns to its home
As bees through tangling thickets come.
One way of thought leads to the vast
Desert of the mind, and there is lost,
But backward leads to a dancing light
And myself there, stiff with delight.
O, well my thought has trodden a way
From this brief day to that long day.

III

THE FIRST HOUSE

That is the earliest thing that I remember—
The narrow house in the long narrow street,
Dark rooms within and darkness out of doors
Where grasses in the garden lift in the wind,
Long grasses clinging round unsteady feet.
The suplight through one narrow passage pours,
As through the keyhole into a dusty room,
Striking with a golden rod the greening gloom.
The tall, tall timber-stacks have yet been kind,
Letting the sun fling his rod clear between,
Lest there should be no gold upon the green,
And no light then for a child to dream upon,
And day be of day's brightness all forlorn.
I saw those timber piles first dark and tall,
And then men clambered up, and stumbled down,
Each with a heavy and long timber borne
Upon broad shoulders, leather-covered, bent.
Hour after hour, day after day they went,
Until the piles were gone and a new sky
Stretched high and white above the garden wall.
And then fresh piles crept slowly up and up,
The strong men staggering, more cruelly bowed,
Till at last they lay idle on the top
Looking down from their height on things so small,
While I looked wondering and fearful up
At the strong men at rest on the new-built cloud.
But there was other gold than the sun's sparse gold—
Florence's hair, its brightness lying still
Upon my mind as then upon the grass.
Now the grass covers it and I am old,
Remembering but her hair and that long grass,
And the great wood-stacks threatening to fall—
When all dark things will.

IV

THE OTHER HOUSE

THAT other house, in the same crowded street,
One red-tiled floor had, answering to my feet,
And a bewildering garden all of light and heat.

Only that red floor and garden now remain,
One glowing firelike in my glowing brain,
One with smell, colour, sun and cloud revived again.

Yet in the garden the sky was very small,
Closed by some darkness beyond the low brown wall;
But from the west the gold could long unhindered fall.

Of human faces I remember none
Amid the garden, but myself alone
With creeping-jenny, sunflower, marigold, snapdragon—

These all my love, these now all my light,
Bringing their kindness to any painful night
The sun brushed all their brightness with his skirt more
bright

And I was happy when I knew it not,
Dreaming of nothing more than that small plot,
And the high sky and sun that floated bright and hot.

t what night was, save dark, I did not know.
e blind shut out the stars: the moon would go
aring, unstared at, moon and stars unnoted flow.

ntil one night, into the strange street led,
To stare at a strange light from the Factory shed,
Wheeling and darting, withdrawn, and sudden again
outsped—

No one knew why—but I knew darkness then,
And saw the stars that hung so still; but when
I lay abed the old starless dark came back again.

Night is not night without the stars and moon.
I knew them not, or I forgot too soon,
And now remember only the glowing sun of noon,

The red floor, and yellow, flowers, and a lonely child,
And a whistle morn and noon and evening shrilled,
And darkness when the household murmurs even were
stilled.

V

THE FIRE

NEAR the house flowed, or paused, the black Canal,
Edged by the timber piles so black and tall.
From the rotten fence I watched the horses pull
Along the footpath, slow and beautiful,
Moving with strength and ease, in their great size
And untired movement wonderful to my eyes;
Their dull brass clanking as each shaggy foot
Stamped the soft cinder track as fine as soot.
The driver lurched old and forbidding by,
Not seeing the child that feared to meet his eye.
I watched the rope dip, tighten, and the water flash
In falling, and then heard the hiss and splash;
I watched the barge drag slowly on and on,
Not dreaming how lovely a ship could ride the water upon,
Not dreaming how lovely flowing water was,
Sung to by trees and fingered by long grass,
Or running from the bosom of a hill
Down, where it flows so deep that it seems still.

But it was by that rotten fence one night
I saw the timber piles break into light,
Suddenly leaping into a heavenly flame
That played with the wind and one with the wind became.
Pile to pile gave its fire, till they were like
Bright angels with flashing swords before they strike,
Terrible and lovely. But men those angels fought,
Small and humble and patient all night wrought,
And all day wrought and night and day again,
And night and day, pouring their hissing rain,
Until the angels tired and one by one died.
Then their black spectres haunted the waterside,
Charred ruins, broken-limbed, no more erect,
Or heaped black dust, with cold white ashes flecked.
But I had seen the angel-quelling men,
With blackened and bruised face, the horses thin,
The glittering harness, the leaky, bubbling mains,
The broad smoke, and the steam from the leaping rains :—
O I had seen what I should not forget,
Men that defeated ruinous angels and shall still defeat.

VI

THE KITE

It was a day
All blue and lifting white,
When I went into the fields with Frank
To fly his kite.

The fields were aged, bare,
Shut between houses everywhere.
All the way there
The wind tugged at the kite to take it
Untethered, toss and break it ;

But Frank held fast, and I
Walked with him admiringly ;
In his light brave and fine
How bright was mine !

We tailed the kite
While the wind flapped its purple face
And yellow head.
Frank's yellow head
Was scarcely higher, and not so bright.
" Let go ! " he cried, and I let go
And watched the kite
Swaying and rising so
That I was rooted to the place,
Watching the kite
Rise into the blue,
Lifting its head against the white
Against the sun,
Against the height
That far-off, farther drew ;
Shivering there
In that fine air
As we below shivered with delight
And fear.

There it floated
Among the birds and clouds at ease
Of others all unnoted,
Swimming above the ranked stiff trees.
And I lay down, looking up at the sky,
The clouds and birds that floated
By others still unnoted,
And that swaying kite
Specking the light :

Looking up at the sky,
The birds and clouds that drew
Nearer, leaving the blue,
Stooping, and then brushing me,
With such tenderness touching me
That I had still lain there
In those fields bare,
Forgetting the kite;
For every cloud was now a kite
Streaming with light.

VII

THE CHAIR

THE chair was made
By hands long dead,
Polished by many bodies sitting there,
Until the wood-lines flowed as clean as waves.

Mine sat restless there,
Or propped to stare
Hugged the low kitchen with fond eyes
Or tired eyes that looked at nothing at all.

Or watched from the smoke rise
The flame's snake-eyes,
Up the black-bearded chimney leap;
Then on my shoulder my dull head would drop,

And half asleep
I heard her creep—
Her never-singing lips shut fast,
Fearing to wake me by a careless breath.

Then, at last,
My lids upcast,
Our eyes met, I smiled and she smiled,
And I shut mine again and truly slept.

Was I that child
Fretful, sick, wild ?
Was that you moving soft and soft
Between the rooms if I but played at sleep ?

Or if I laughed,
Talked, cried, or coughed,
You smiled too, just perceptibly,
Or your large kind brown eyes said, O poor boy !

From the fireside I
Could see the narrow sky
Through the barred heavy window panes,
Could hear the sparrows quarrelling round the lilac ;

And hear the heavy rains
Choking in the roof-drains :—
Else of the world I nothing heard
Or nothing remember now. But most I loved

To watch when you stirred
Busily like a bird
At household doings ; with hands floured
Mixing a magic with your cakes and tarts.

O into me, sick, froward,
Yourself you poured ;
In all those days and weeks when I
Sat, slept, woke, whimpered, wondered and slept
again.

Now but a memory
To bless and harry me
Remains of you still swathed with care;
Myself your chief care, sitting by the hearth

Propped in the pillowed chair,
Following you with tired stare,
And my hand following the wood lines
By dead hands smoothed and followed many years.

VIII

THE SWING

It was like floating in a blessed dream to roam
Across green meadows, far from home,
With only trees and quivering sky to hedge the sight,
Dazzling the eyes with strange delight.
Such wide, wide fields I had never seen, and never dreamed
Could be; and wonderful it seemed
To wander over green and under green and run
Unwatched even of the shining sun.

One tree there was that held a wrinkled creaking bough
Far over the grass, hanging low;
And a swing from it hanging drew us near and made
New brightness beneath that doming shade.
For there my sisters swung long hours delightedly,
And there delighted clambered I;
And all our voices shrilled as one when up we flung
And into the stinging sharp leaves swung.

Then in a garden dense with bramble and sweet flowers,
Where honeysuckle a new sweetness pours,
We sat and ate and drank Well I remember how
We were all shaded by one bough
Bending with red fruit over our uplifted eyes,
Teasing our well-watched covetousness.

And then we went back happy to the empty swing,
But I was tired of everything
Except the grass and trees and the wide shadows there
Widening slowly everywhere.
It was like swinging in a solemn dream to roam
In a strange air, far from home—
Until I saw the shadows suddenly wake and move,
And float, float down from above.
Then I ran quickly back, round the large gloomy trees,
O with what shivering unease!
And stumbled where they waited, and was far too glad,
Finding them, to be afraid or sad.

—Then waited an unforgetting year once more to see
So wide a sky, so great a tree

IX

FEAR

SURELY I must have ailed
On that dark night,
Or my childish courage failed
Because there was no light;
Or terror must have come
With his chill wing,
And made my angel dumb,
Or found him slumbering.

Because I could not sleep
  Terror began to wake,
Close at my side to creep
  And sting me like a snake.
And I was afraid of death,
  But when I thought of pain—
O, language no word hath
  To recall that thought again!
Into my heart fear crawled
  And wreathed close around,
Mortal, convulsive, cold,
  And I lay bound.
Fear set before my eyes
  Unimaginable pain;
Approaching agonies
  Sprang nimbly into my brain.
Just as a thrilling wind
  Plucks every mournful wire,
So terror on my wild mind
  Fingered with ice and fire.
O, not death I feared,
  But the anguish of the body;
My dizzying passions heard,
  Saw my own bosom bloody.
I thought of years of woe,
  Moments prolonged to years,
Heard my heart racing so,
  Redoubling all those fears.
Yet still I could not cry,
  Not a sound the stillness broke;
But the dark stirred, and my
  Negligent angel woke

X

THE STREETS

MARLBORO' and Waterloo and Trafalgar,
Tuileries, Talavera, Valenciennes,
Were strange names all, and all familiar ;

For down their streets I went, early and late
(Is there a street where I have never been
Of all those hundreds, narrow, skyless, straight ?)—

Early and late, they were my woods and meadows ;
The rain upon their dust my summer smell ;
Their scant herb and brown sparrows and harsh shadows

Were all my spring. Was there another spring ?
I knew their noisy desolation well,
Drinking it up as a child drinks everything

Knowing no other world than brick and stone,
With one rich memory of the earth all bright
Now all is fallen into oblivion—

All that I was, in years of school and play,
Things that I hated, things that were delight,
Are all forgotten, or shut all away

Behind a creaking door that opens slow.
But there's a child that walks those streets of war,
Hearing his running footsteps as they go

Echoed from house to house, and wondering
At Marlboro', Waterloo and Trafalgar ;
And at night, when the yellow gas lamps fling

Unsteady shadows, singing for company ;
Yet loving the lighted dark, and any star
Caught by sharp roofs in a narrow net of sky.

XI

WHEN CHILDHOOD DIED

I CAN recall the day
  When childhood died.
I had grown thin and tall
  And eager-eyed.

Such a false happiness
  Had seized me then ;
A child, I saw myself
  Man among men.

Now I see that I was
  Ignorant, dazed,
As one for the surgeon's knife
  Anæsthetized.

So that I did not know
  What loomed before,
Nor how, a child, I became
  A child no more.

The world's sharpened knife
  Cut round my heart ;
Then something was taken
  And flung apart.

I did not, could not know
  What had been done.
Under some evil drug
  I lived as one

At home in the seeming world ;
  Then slowly came
Through years and years to myself
  And was no more the same.

I know now an ill thing was done
  To a young child
By the world's wary knife
  Maimed and defiled

I can recall the day
  Almost without anger or pain,
When childhood did not die
  But was slain.

XII

ALL THAT I WAS I AM

HATEFUL it seems now, yet was I not happy?
Starved of the things I loved, I did not know
I loved them, and was happy lacking them.
If bitterness comes now (and that is hell)
It is when I forget that I was happy,
Accusing Fate, that sits and nods and laughs,
Because I was not born a bird or tree.
Let accusation sleep, lest God's own finger
Point angry from the cloud in which He hides.
Who may regret what was, since it has made
Himself himself? All that I was I am,
And the old childish joy now lives in me
At sight of a green field or a green tree.

THE SHOCK

THINKING of these, of beautiful brief things,
Of things that are of sense and spirit made,
  Of meadow flowers, dense hedges and dark bushes
  With roses trailing over nests of thrushes ;

Of dews so pure and bright and flush'd and cool,
And like the flowers as brief as beautiful ;
  Thinking of the tall grass and daisies tall
  And whispered music of the waving bents ;

Of these that like a simple child I love
Since they are life and life is flowers and grass ;
  Thinking of trees, and water at their feet
  Answering the trees with murmur childlike sweet ;

Thinking of those high thoughts that passed like the wind,
Yet left their brightness lying on the mind,
  As the white blossoms the raw airs shake down
  That lie awhile yet lovely on the chill grass ;

Thinking of the dark, where all these end like cloud,
And the stars watch like Knights to Honour vowed
  Of those too lovely colours of the East,
  And the too tender loveliness of grey :

Thinking of all, I was as one that stands
'Neath the bewildering shock of breaking seas ;
  Mortal-immortal things had lost their power,
  I knew no more than sweetness in the flower ;

No more than colour in the changing light,
No more than order in the stars of night ;
  A breathing tree was but gaunt wood and leaves ;
  All these had lost their old power over me.

I had forgotten that ever such things were :
Immortal-mortal, I had been but blind . . .
  O the wild sweetness of the renewing sense
  That swept me and drove all but sweetness hence !

. . . As beautiful as briet—ah ! lovelier,
Being but mortal. Yet I had great fear—
That I should die ere these sweet things were dead,
Or live on knowing the wild sweetness fled.

THE UNLOOSENING

WINTER was weary. All his snows were failing—
Still from his stiff grey head he shook the rime
Upon the grasses, bushes and broad hedges,
But all was lost in the new touch of Time.

And the bright-globèd hedges were all ruddy,
As though warm sunset glowed perpetual.
The myriad swinging tassels of first hazel,
From purple to pale gold, were swinging all

In the soft wind, no more afraid of Winter.
Nor chaffinch, wren, nor lark was now afraid.
And Winter heard, or (ears too hard of hearing)
Snuffed the South-West that in his cold hair played.

And his hands trembled. Then with voice a-quaver
He called the East Wind, and the black East ran,
Roofing the sky with iron, and in the darkness
Winter crept out and chilled the earth again.

And while men slept the still pools were frozen,
Mosses were white, with ice the long grasses bowed ;
The hawthorn buds and the greening honeysuckle
Froze, and the birds were dumb under that cloud.

And men and beasts were dulled, and children even
Less merry, under that low iron dome.
Early the patient rooks and starlings gathered ;
Any warm narrow place for men was home.

And Winter laughed, but the third night grew weary,
And slept all heavy, till the East Wind thought him dead.
Then the returning South West in his nostrils
Breathed, and his snows melted. And his head

Uplifting, he saw all the laughing valley,
Heard the unloosened waters leaping down
Broadening over the meadows; saw the sun running
From hill to hill and glittering upon the town.

All day he stared. But his head drooped at evening,
Bent and slow he stumbled into the white
Cavern of a great chalk hill, hedged with tall bushes,
And in its darkness found a darker night

Among the broken cliff and falling water,
Freezing or falling quietly everywhere;
Locked in a long, long sleep, his brain undreaming,
With only water moving anywhere.

Old men at night dreamed that they saw him going,
And looked, and dared not look, lest he should turn.
And young men felt the air beating on their bodies,
And the young women woke from dreams that burn.

And children going through the fields at morning
Saw the unloosened waters leaping down,
And broke the hazel boughs and wore the tassels
Above their eyes—a pale and shaking crown.

WILD HEART

I

DARK AND STRANGE

When first Love came, then was I but a boy
Swept with delirium of undreamt joy.
Now Love comes to a man serious with change
Of life and death—and makes the world dark and strange.

II

WILD HEART

Wild heart, wild heart,
Where does the wind find home?
Wild heart, wild heart,
Where does the wild blood rest?
Home, home,
Rest, rest—
Unto you I come
And catch you to my breast.

Wild heart, wild heart,
There the wind will sleep,
Wild heart, wild heart,
And the blood gently flow.
Come, come,
Unresting rest
Within my heart's cave deep
Where thoughts like bright stars glow.

Wild heart, wild heart,
Here, here is your home.
Wild heart, wild heart,
With that winged star I come.
Home, home,
Rest in unrest—
Unto you, wild heart, I come,
My wild heart is your home.

III

HOME FOR LOVE

Because the earth is vast and dark
And wet and cold ;
Because man's heart wants warmth and light
Lest it grow old ;

Therefore the house was built—wall, roof
And brick and beam,
By a lost hand following the lost
Delight of a dream.

And room and stair show how that hand
Groped in eager doubt,
With needless weight of teasing timber
Matching his thought—

Such fond superfluousness of strength
In wall and wood
As his half-wise, half-fearful eye
Deemed only good.

His brain he built into the house,
Laboured his bones ;
He burnt his heart into the brick
And red hearth-stones.

It is his blood that makes the house
Still warm, safe, bright,
Honest as aim and eye and hand,
As clean, as light.

Because the earth is vast and dark
The house was built—
Now with another heart and fire
To be fulfilled

IV

THE ALDE

How near I walked to Love,
How long, I cannot tell.
I was like the Alde that flows
Quietly through green level lands,
So quietly, it knows
Their shape, their greenness and their shadows well ;
And then undreamingly for miles it goes
And silently, beside the sea.

Seamews circle over,
The winter wildfowl wings,
Long and green the grasses wave
Between the river and the sea.
The sea's cry, wild or grave,
From bank to low bank of the river rings ;
But the uncertain river though it crave
The sea, knows not the sea.

Was that indeed salt wind ?
Came that noise from falling
Wild waters on a stony shore ?
Oh, what is this new troubling tide
Of eager waves that pour
Around and over, leaping, parting, recalling ? . . .
How near I moved (as day to same day wore)
And silently, beside the sea !

V

AGAINST THE COLD PALE SKY

Against the cold pale sky
The elm tree company rose high.
All the fine hues of day
That flowered so bold had died away.
Only chill blue, faint green,
And deepening dark blue were seen.

There swinging on a bough
That hung or floated broad and low,
The lamp of evening, bright
With more than planetary light
Was beautiful and free—
A white bird swaying on the tree,

You watched and I watched,
Our eyes and hearts so surely matched
We saw the white bird leap, leap
Shining in his journey steep
Through that vast cold sky.
Our hearts knew his unuttered cry—

A cry of free delight
Spreading over the clustering night.
Pole Hill grave and stark
Stared at the valley's tidal dark,
The Darent glimmered wan ;
But that eager planet winging on,

And singing on, went high
Into the deeps and heights of sky.
And our thoughts rising too
Brightened the mortal darkness through
Trembled and danced and sang
Till the mute invisible heavens rang.

VI

THE DARK FIRE

Love me not less
Yet ease me of this fever
That in my wondering heart
Burns, sinks, burns again ever

Is it your love
In me so fiercely burning,
Or my love leaping to you
Then requickened returning?

Come not to me,
Bring not your body nearer.
Though you overleapt the miles
I could not behold you clearer.

I could not clasp you
Than in my thought more surely;
Breast to breast, heart to heart
Might cling no more securely.

I do not know you,
Seeing you, more than unseeing.
What you are that you are
Here in my spiritual being.

Leave me you cannot,
Nor can I remove me
From the sevenfold dark fire
You have lit here since you love me.

Yet love unsure
No wilder could be burning.
Come, go, come, go,
There's neither leaving nor returning.

Love me, love me more.
O, not my heart shall quaver
If the dark fire more deep
Sinks and is sevenfold sevenfold graver.

VII

THE KESTREL

In a great western wind we climbed the hill
And saw the clouds run up, ride high and sink ;
And there were shadows running at our feet
Till it seemed the very earth could not be still,
Nor could our hearts be still, nor could we think
Our hearts could ever be still, our thought less fleet
Than the dizzy clouds, less than the flying wind.
Eastward the valley and the dark steep hill
And other hills and valleys lost behind
In mist and light. The hedges were not yet bare
Though the wind picked at them as he went by.
The woods were fire, a fire that dense or clear
Burned steady, but could not burn up the shadows
Rooted where the trees' roots entangled lie,
In darkness ; or a flame burned solitary
In the middle of the highest of brown meadows,
Burned solitary and unconsuming where
A red tree stooped to its black shadow and
The kestrel's shadow hunted the kestrel up the hill.
We climbed, and as we stood (where yet we stand
And of the visioned sun and shadow still drink)
Happiness like a shadow chased our thought
That tossed on free wings up and down the world ;
Till by that wild swift-darting shadow caught
Our free spirits their free pinions furled.
Then as the kestrel began once more the heavens to climb,
A new-winged spirit rose clear above the hills of time.

VIII

THE IMAGE

I

I AM a river flowing round your hill,
Holding your image in my lingering water,
With imaged white clouds rising round your head,
And I am happy to bear your image still.
Though a loud ruffling wind may break and scatter
That happiness, I know it is not fled.

But when the wind is gone or gentled so
That only the least quivering quivers on,
Your image recomposes in my breast
With those high clouds, quiet and white as snow--
Spiritual company ; and when day's gone
And those white clouds have stepped into the west :

And the dark blue filling the heavens deep
Is bright with stars that sing above your head,
Their light lies in the deep of my dark eyes
With your dark shape, a shadow of your sleep. .
I am happy still, watching the bright stars tread
Around you shadow that in my bosom lies.

IX

PERVERSITIES

I

Now come,
And I that moment will forget you.
Sit here
And in your eyes I shall not see you.

Speak, speak
That I no more may hear your music.
Into my arms,
Till I've forgotten I ever met you.

I shall not have you when I hold you
Body to body,
Though your firm flesh, though your strong fingers
Be knit to these.
On a wild hill I shall be chasing
The thought of you ;
False will be those true things I told you :
I shall forget you.

No, do not come.
Where the wind hunts, there shall I find you.
In cool gray cloud
Where the sun slips through I shall see you,
Or where the trees
Are silenced, and darken in their branches.
Your coming would
Loosen, when my thought still would bind you.

Against my shoulder your warm shoulder
When last you leaned—
Think, were you nearer then and dearer,
Or I more glad ?
O eternal love, your body brings you
No nearer.
Trust me, be bold, be even a little bolder
And do not come.

X

PERVERSITIES

II

YET when I am alone my eyes say, Come.
My hands cannot be still.
In that first moment all my senses ache,
Cells that were empty fill,
The clay walls shake,
And unimprisoned thought runs where it will.

Runs and is glad and listens and doubts, and glooms
Because you are not here.
Then once more rises and is clear again
As sense is never clear,
And happy, though in vain
These eyes wait and these arms to bring you near.

Yet spite of thought my arms and eyes say, Come,
Pained with such discontent.
For though thought have you all my senses ache—
O, it was not meant
My body should never wake
But on thought's tranquil bosom rest content.

XI

THE VALLEY

BETWEEN the beechen hill and the green down
The valley pastures sink;
And the green river runs through their warm green
Northward into the sea.

Dark is the beechen hill these winter days,
The trees swallow the light
And make an evening there when morning shines
And the down heaves to the south.

Only when the sun's low a fire creeps through
The dark of the beechen hill ;
While the green down, misty from head to foot,
Grows huge and dim with sleep.

Then in the valley by the yet shining river,
Under the noisy elms,
I know how like twin shadows óver me
Rising high, east and west,

Are Love's dark hills, quiet, unchanging, vast,
Sleeping beneath the stars ,
While I with those stars in my bosom shining
Move northward to the sea.

XII

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE MIND

I COULD not love if my thought loved not too,
Nor could my body touch the body of you,
Unless first in the dark night of the mind
Love had fulfilled what Love had well designed.

Was it in thought or flesh we walked, when low
The sun dropped, and the white scar on the hill
Sank into the dark trees ?
Could we indeed so quietly go
Body by body into that heavenly glow ?

The elms that rose so vast above the mill
Near leafless were and still ;
But from the branches with such loud unease
Black flocking starlings mixed their warring cries
That seemed the greater noise of the creaking mill ;
And every branch and extreme twig was black
With birds that whistled and heard and whistled back,
Filling with noise as late with wings the skies.
Was it their noise we heard,
Or clamour of other thoughts in our quiet mind that stirred ?

Then through the climbing hazel hedge new thinned
By the early and rapacious wind,
We saw the silver birches gleam with light
Of frozen masts in seas all wild and green.
O, were they truly trees, or some unseen
Thought taking on an image dark and bright ?
And did those bodies see them, or the mind ?
And did those bodies face once more the hill
To bathe in night, or on a darker road
Our spirits unseeing unwearying rise and rise
Where these feet never trod ?

From that familiar outer darkness I
Would rise to the inner, deeper, darker sky
And find you in my spirit—or find you not
O, never, never, if not in my thought.

PART II

THE BODY

When I had dreamed and dreamed what woman's beauty was,
And how that beauty seen from unseen surely flowed,
I turned and dreamed again, but sleeping now no more :
My eyes shut and my mind with inward vision glowed.

" I did not think ! " I cried, seeing that wavering shape
That steadied and then wavered, as a cherry bough in June
Lifts and falls in the wind—each fruit a fruit of light ;
And then she stood as clear as an unclouded moon.

As clear and still she stood, moonlike remotely near ;
I saw and heard her breathe, I years and years away.
Her light streamed through the years, I saw her clear and still,
Shape and spirit together mingling night with day.

Water falling, falling with the curve of time
Over green-hued rock, then plunging to its pool
Far, far below, a falling spear of light ;
Water falling golden from the sun but moonlike cool :

Water has the curve of her shoulder and breast,
Water falls as straight as her body rose,
Water her brightness has from neck to still feet,
Water crystal-cold as her cold body flows.

But not water has the colour I saw when I dreamed,
  Nor water such strength has. I joyed to behold
How the blood lit her body with lamps of fire
  And made the flesh glow that like water gleamed cold.

A flame in her arms and in each finger flame,
  And flame in her bosom, flame above, below,
The curve of climbing flame in her waist and her thighs;
  From foot to head did flame into red flame flow.

I knew how beauty seen from unseen must rise,
  How the body's joy for more than body's use was made.
I knew then how the body is the body of the mind,
  And how the mind's own fire beneath the cool skin played

O shape that once to have seen is to see evermore,
  Falling stream that falls to the deeps of the mind,
Fire that once lit burns while aught burns in the world,
  Foot to head a flame moving in the spirit's wind!

If these eyes could see what these eyes have not seen—
  The inward vision clear—how should I look for joy,
Knowing that beauty's self rose visible in the world
  Over age that darkens, and griefs that destroy?

THE TOSSING MOUNTAINS

They were like dreams that in a drowsy hour
A sad old God had dreamed in loneliness of power.
They were like dreams that in his drowsy mind
Rose slowly and then, darkening, made him wise and blind—
So that he saw no more the level sun,

Nor the small solid shadow of unclouded noon.
The dark green heights rose slowly from the green
Of the dark water till the sky was narrowly seen ;
Only at night the lifting walls were still,
And stars were bright and calm above each calm dark hill.
. . . I could not think but that a God grown old
Saw in a dream or waking all this round of bold
And wavelike hills, and knew them but a thought,
Or but a wave uptost and poised awhile then caught
Back to the sea with waves a million more
That rise and pause and break at last upon the shore.
A God, a God saw first those hills that I
Saw now immense upholding the starry crowded sky :
His breath the mist that clung their shoulders round,
His slow unconscious sigh that easeless floating sound.
Ere mine his thought failed under each rough height
And then was brave, seeing the stars climb calm and bright.
Ere they were named he named them in his mood,
Like varying children of one giant warring brood—
Broad-Foot, Cloud-Gatherer, Long-Back, Winter-Head,
Bravery and Bright-Face and that long Home of the Dead ;
And their still waters glittering in his glance
Named Buckler, Silver Dish, Two Eyes and Shining Lance,
Names unrecorded, but the circling wind
Remembers and repeats them to the listening mind. . . .
That mind was mine. At Shining Lance I stared
Between Long-Back and Winter-Head as the new sun bared
The Lake and heights of shadow and the wan gold
Deepened and new warmth came into the light's sharp cold.
And the near trees shivered no more but shook
Their music over Shining Lance ; and the excited brook
Freshened in the sun's eye and tossed his spray
High and sparkling, and then sprang dancing, dancing away.

But Winter-Head and Long-Back, gravely bright,
Stood firm as if for ever and a day and a night—
As they were more than a wave before 'tis caught
Back to the tossing tide, more than a flying thought,
More than a dream that an old God once dreamed
When visionary not at all visionary seemed.

THE POND

GRAY were the rushes
Beside the budless bushes,
  Green-patched the pond.
The lark had left soaring
Though yet the sun was pouring
  His gold here and beyond.

Bramble-branches held me,
But had they not compelled me
  Yet had I lingered there
Hearing the frogs and then
Watching the water-hen
  That stared back at my stare.

There amid the bushes
Were blackbird's nests and thrush's,
  Soon to be hidden
In leaves on green leaves thickening,
Boughs over long boughs quickening
  Swiftly, unforbidden.

The lark had left singing
But song all round was ringing,
  As though the rushes
Were sighingly repeating
And mingling that most sweet thing
  With the sweet note of thrushes.

That sweetness rose all round me,
But more than sweetness bound me,
A spirit stirred;
Shadowy and cold it neared me,
Then shrank as if it feared me—
But 'twas I that feared.

TEN O'CLOCK NO MORE *

The wind has thrown
The boldest of trees down.
Now disgraced it lies,
Naked in spring beneath the drifting skies,
Naked and still.

It was the wind
So furious and blind
That scourged half England through,
Ruining the fairest where most fair it grew
By dell and hill,

And springing here,
The black clouds dragging near,
Against this lonely elm
Thrust all his strength to maim and overwhelm
In one wild shock.

As in the deep
Satisfaction of dark sleep
The tree her dream dreamed on,
And woke to feel the wind's arms round her thrown
And her head rock.

* *Ten o'clock* is the name of a tall tree that crowned the eastern Cotswolds.

And the wind raught
Her ageing boughs and caught
Her body fast again.
Then in one agony of age, grief, pain,
She fell and died.

Her noble height,
Branches that loved the light,
Her music and cool shade,
Her memories and all of her is dead
On the hill side.

But the wind stooped,
With madness tired, and drooped
In the soft valley and slept.
While morning strangely round the hush'd tree crept
And called in vain.

The birds fed where
The roots uptorn and bare
Thrust shameful at the sky ;
And pewits round the tree would dip and cry
With the old pain.

"Ten o'clock's gone!"
Said sadly every one.
And mothers looking thought
Of sons and husbands far away that fought :—
And looked again.

FROM WEAR TO THAMES

Is it because Spring now is come
That my heart leaps in its bed of dust ?
Is it with sorrow or strange pleasure
To watch the green time's gathering treasure ?

Or is there some too sharp distaste
In all this quivering green and gold ?
Something that makes bare boughs yet barer,
And the eye's pure delight the rarer ?

Not that the new found Spring is sour. . . .
The blossom swings on the cherry branch,
From Wear to Thames I have seen this greenness
Cover the six-months-winter meanness.

And windflowers and yellow gillyflowers
Pierce the astonished earth with light :
And most-loved wallflower's bloody petal
Shakes over that long frosty battle.

But this leaping, sinking heart
Finds question in grass, bud and blossom—
Too deeply into the earth is prying,
Too sharply hears old voices crying.

There is in blossom, bud and grass
Something that's neither sorrow nor joy,
Something that sighs like autumn sighing,
And in each living thing is dying.

It is myself that whispers and stares
Down from the hill and in the wood,
And in the untended orchard's shining
Sees the light through thin leaves declining.

Let me forget that I have been
What I can never be again.
Let me forget my winter's meanness
In this fond, flushing world of greenness.

Let me forget the world that is
The changing image of my thought,
Nor see in thicket and hedge and meadow
Myself, a grave perplexèd shadow ;

And O, forget that gloomy shade
That breathes his cloud 'twixt earth and light
All, all forget but sun and blossom,
And the bird that bears heaven in his bosom.

TIME FROM HIS GRAVE

When the south-west wind came
The air grew bright and sweet, as though a flame
Had cleansed the world of winter. The low sky
As the wind lifted it rose trembling vast and high,
And white clouds sallied by
As children in their pleasure go
Chasing the sun beneath the orchard's shadow and snow.
Nothing, nothing was the same !
Not the dull brick, not the stained London stone,
Not the delighted trees that lost their moan—
Their moan that daily vexed me with such pain
Until I hated to see trees again ;
Nor man nor woman was the same
Nor could be stones again,
Such light and colour with the south-west came.

As I drank all all that brightness up I saw
A dark globe lapt in fold on fold of gloom,
With all her hosts asleep in that cold tomb,
Sealed by an iron law,
And there amid the hills,
Locked in an icy hollow lay the bones
Of one that ghostly and enormous slept
Obscure 'neath wrinkled ice and bedded stones.
But as spring water the old dry channel fills,
Came the south-west wind filling all the air.
Then Time rose up, ghostly, enormous, stark,
With cold gray light in cold gray eyes, and dark
Dark clouds caught round him, feet to rigid chin.
The wind ran flushed and glorious in,
Godlike from hill to frozen hill-top stepp'd,
And swiftly upon that bony stature swept.
Then a long breath and then quick breaths I heard,
In those black caves of stillness music stirred,
Those icy heights were riven :
From crown to clearing hollow grass was green ;
And godlike from flushed hill to hill-top leapt
Time, youthful, quick, serene,
Dew flashing from his limbs, light from his eyes
To the sheeny skies.
A lark's song climbed from earth and dropped from heaven,
Far off the tide clung to the shore
Now silent nevermore.
. . . . Into what vision'd wonder was I swept,
Upon what unimaginable joyance had I leapt !

WILDER MUSIC

Came the same cuckoo's cry
  All day across the mead
Flitted the butterfly
  All day dittering over my head.
Came a bleak crawk-caw
  Between tall broad trees.
Came shadows, floating, drifting slowly down
  Large leaves from darker trees.

Rose the lark with the rising sun,
  Rose the mist after the lark,
O wild and sweet the clamour begun
  Round the heels of the limping dark.
Rose after white cloud white cloud,
  Nodded green cloud to green ;
The stiff and dark earth stirred, breathing aloud,
  And dew shook from the green

Remained the eyes that stared,
  Ears that ached to hear ;
Remained the nerve of being, bared,
  Stung with delight and fear.
Beauty flushed, ran and returned,
  Like a music rose and fell ,
Staring and blind and deaf I listened and burned—
  A wilder music fell.

GRASSES

O COVER me, long gentle grasses,
  Cover me with your seeding heads,
  Cover me with your shaking limbs,
  Cover me with your light soft hands,
Cover me as the delicious long wind passes
  Over you and me, green grasses.

'Tis of your blood I would be drinking,
To your soft shrilling listening now,
And your thin fingers peering through
At the deep forests of the sky.
O satisfy my peevish thought past thinking,
My sense with your sense linking.

Already are your brown roots creeping
Around the roots of my mind's mind,
Into the darkness hidden within
The rayed dark of unconsciousness ;
And your long stems in a bright wind are leaping
Over me uneasily sleeping.

O cover me, long gentle grasses,
As one day over a quiet flesh
You will shake, shake and dance and sing ;
And body too still and spirit astir
Will hear you in every firm bright wind that passes
Over you, loved green grasses

FAIR AND BRIEF

So fair, that all the morning aches
With such monotony !
So brief, that sadness breaks
The brittle spell.

Nothing so fair, nothing so brief .
The sun leaps up and falls.
The wind tosses every leaf :
Every leaf dies
Blossom, a white cloud in the air,
Is blown like a cloud away.
Must all be brief, being fair ?
Nothing remain ?

Yes, night and that high regiment
Of stars that wheel and march,
Ever their bright lines bent
To a secret thought ;

Moving immutable, bright and grave,
Fair beyond all things fair ;
Though all else vanish, save
Imagination's dream.

NIGHTFALL

I

Eve goes slowly
Dancing lightly
Clad with shadow up the hills ;
Birds their singing
Cease at last, and silence
Falling like fine rain the valley fills

Not a bat's cry
Stirs the stillness
Perfect as broad water sleeping,
Not a moth's wings
Flit in the gathering darkness,
Not a mouselike moonray ev'n comes creeping

Then a light shines
From the casement,
Wreathed with jasmine boughs and stars,
Palely golden
As the late eve's primrose,
Glimmers through green leafy prison bars.

II

Only joy now
Come in silence,
Come before your look's forgot ;
Come and hearken
While the lonely shadow
Broadens on the hill and then is not

Now the hour is,
Here the place is,
Here am I who saw thee here.
Evening darkens,
All is still and marvellous,
Now the sharp stars in the deep sky peer.

Come and fill me
As the wind fills
Leafy wide boughs of a tree ;
Come and windlike
Cleanse my slumbrous branches,
Come and moonlike bathe the leaves of me

III

Eve has gone and
Night follows,
Every bush is now a *ghost* ;
Every tree looms
Lofty large and sombre ;
All day's simple friendliness is lost

See the poplars
Black in blackness,
In all their leaves there is no sigh.

'Neath that darkling
Cedar who dare wander
Now, or under the vast oak would lie ! . . .

Till that tingling
Silence broken
Every clod renews its breath ;
Birds, leaves, grasses
Heave as one, then sleep on
Full of sweeter sleep and unlike death.

IV

Only joy now
Come like music
Falling clear from strings of light ;
Come like shadow
Drinking up late sunrays,
Come like moonrays sweeping the round night.

See how night is
Opening flowerlike
Open so thy bosom to me
See how earth falls
Easeful into silence :
Let my moth-wing'd thought so fall on thee.

While the lamp's beam
Primrose golden
Now is like a shifting spear
Borne in battle,
Seen awhile then hidden,
Bold then beaten—now long lost, and here !

THE SLAVES

The tall slaves bow if that capricious King
But glances as he passes ;
Their dark hoods drawing over abashèd faces
They bow humbly, unappealingly.
The dark robes round their shuddering bodies cling,
They bow and but whisper as he passes.

They have not learned to look into his eyes,
If he insults to answer,
To stand with head erect and angry arching bosom :
They bow humbly, unappealingly,
As though he mastered earth and the violet inky skies,
And whisper piteously for only answer.

So they stand, tall slaves, ashamed of their great height,
And if he comes raving,
Shouting from the west, furious and moody,
They bow more humbly, unappealingly,
Ashamed to remember how they lived in that calm light ;
They droop until he passes, tired of raving.

Only when he's gone they lift their darkened brows,
Light comes back to their eyes,
Their leaves caress the light, the light laves their branches,
They move loverlike, appealingly ;
Slaves now no more the poplars lift and shake their boughs,
And there's a heaven of evening in their eyes.

THE FUGITIVE

In the hush of early even
The clouds came flocking over,
Till the last wind fell from heaven
And no bird cried,

Darkly the clouds were flocking,
Shadows moved and deepened,
Then paused ; the poplar's rocking
Ceased ; the light hung still

Like a painted thing, and deadly.
Then from the cloud's side flickered
Sharp lightning, thrusting madly
At the cowering fields.

Thrice the fierce cloud lighten'd,
Down the hill slow thunder trembled ;
Day in her cave grew frightened,
Crept away, and died.

THE UNTHRIFT

HERE in the shade of the tree
The hours go by
Silent and swift,
Lightly as birds fly.
Then the deep clouds broaden and drift,
Or the cloudless darkness and the worn moon.
Waking, the dreamer knows he is old,
And the day that he dreamed was gone
Is gone.

THE WREN

WITHIN the greenhouse dim and damp
The heat floats like a cloud.
Pale rose-leaves droop from the rust roof
With rust-edged roses bowed.
As I go in
Out flies the startled wren.

By the tall dark fir tree he sings
Morn after morn still,
Shy and bold he flits and sings
Tinily sweet and shrill.
As I go out
His song follows me about . . .

About the orchard under trees
Beaded with cherries bright,
Past the rat-haunted Honeybourne
And up those hills of light :
As up I go
His notes more sweetly flow.

Or down those dark hills when night's there
Full of dark thoughts and deep,
A thin clear soundless music comes
Like stars in broken sleep.
When I come down
All those dark thoughts are flown.

And now that sweetness is more sweet,
Here where the aeroplanes
Labouring and groaning in the height
Lift their lifeless vans :—
Sweet, sweet to hear
The far off wren singing clear

I

In this high beechwood where
The shadows are dew'd blossoms, drifting down
Between broad boughs or hung
On spider threads wavering in the air;
In this green beechwood steep
The light spreads like thin water cool and deep.

The oldest beeches here
Rest but a moment from the ancient strife.
So kings, when all else died,
In clutch of limb with limb, breast caught to breast,
Might stand for ever,
Or a moment, in the agony of endeavour.

What strength and pain was there
In breasts and arms and knees and writhen thighs.
Blind and enraged they fought
With shadows and with winds and ghostly voices
Nor fought in vain
Since morn by morn renewed their pride again.

Here in this beechwood, here
In this steep cliff of summer's light and dark,
Darker shadows fall
Than ever bloomed in summer and swayed down
Into the wood's cool deep
Where midnight's soundless surges slowly creep.

II

Above the trees the down
Is bright and bare.
The wind runs there

Lightly, overpassing the swift weed—
Thyme, scabious, mint,
Lifting their sweetness to the breathing trees.

There lizards sleep
Waking, and gold
Spiders are quick and bold.
The woodpile buds in smoke and flowers with flame,
Adding golden heat to heat
As weeds add sensual sweet to sweet unseen.

Even there, by wood and down,
With shadow and light
For blossom dark and bright,
An ill weed with yet darker shadow blooms:
Sin, disease, death—
All the evil of the world grows tenfold evil.

THE WINDS

In these green fields, in this green spring,
In this green world of burning sweet
That drives its sour from everything
And burns the Arctic with new heat,
That seems so slow and flies so fleet
On half-seen wing;

In this green world the birds are all
With motion mad, are wild with song;
The grass leaps like a sudden wall
Flung up against a foe that long
Strode round and wrought his frosty wrong.
The bright winds call,

The bright winds answer; the clouds rise
White from the grave, shaking their head,
Strewing the grave-clothes through the skies,
In languid drifting shadow shed
Upon the fields where, slowly spread,
Each shadow dies.

In every wood is green and gold,
The unbridged river runs all green
With queenly swan-clouds floating bold
Down to the mill's swift guillotine.
Beyond the mill each murdered queen
Floats white and cold.

—If I could rise up in a cloud
And look down on the new earth in flight,
Shadow-like cast my thought's thin shroud
Back upon these fields of light;
And hear the winds of day and night
Meet, singing loud!

THE WANDERER

Over the pool of sleep
The night mists creep,
Then faint thin light and then clear day,
Noontide, and lingering afternoon,
Then that Wanderer, the Moon,
Wandering her old wild way.

How many spirits follow
Her in that dark hollow!
Like a lost lamb she roams on high
Through the cold and soundless sky,
And stares down into her deep
Reflection in the pool of sleep.

How many follow
Her in that lone hollow!
She sees them not nor would she hear
Though both shape and sound were clear,
But stares, stares into the pool
Of her fear and beauty full.

Far in strange gay skies
She pales and dies,
Forgetting that bright transitory
Reflection of astonished glory,
Nor heeds the spirits that follow
Her into day's bright hollow

MERRILL'S GARDEN

THERE is a garden where the seeded stems of thin long
grass are bowed
Beneath July's slow rains and heat and tired children's
trailing feet;
And the trees' neglected branches droop and make a cloud
beneath the cloud,
And in that dark the crimson dew of raspberries shines more
sweet than sweet.

The flower of the tall acacia's gone, the acacia's flower is
white no more,
The aspen lifts his pithless arms, the aspen leaves are
close and still;
The wind that tossed the clouds along, gray clouds and
white like feathers bore,
Lets even a feather faintly fall and smoke spread hugely
where it will.

But though the acacia's flower is gone and raspberries bear
bright fruit untasted,
Beauty lives there, oh rich and rare, past the sum of eager
June.
The lime tree's pyramid of flower and leaf and yellow
flower unwasted
Rises at eve and bars the breast wild-heaving of the timid
moon.

Now the tall pear-trees unrebuked lift their green fingers
to the sky;
Their lower boughs are crossed like arms of templars in
long stony sleep.
Their arms are crossed as though the wind, returning from
wild war on high,
Had touched them with an angry breath, or whispered
from his cavern deep.

A foxglove lifts her bells and bells silent above the singing
grass,
Still the old marigold her light sprinkles like riches to the
poor.
Snapdragon still his changeling blossom shakes with the
burden of the bees,
And the strong bindweed creeps and winds and springs on
high a conqueror.

Would now her eyes grieve to behold snapdragon, foxglove,
marigold
Daily diminish in their sweet and bindweed wreathing over
all—

Weed and grass and weed and grass, friendless, melancholy,
cold,
Wreathing the earth like wreathing snow from bare wall
to low greening wall?

Old were her eyes that lingered on old trees and grass and
flowers trim.
She smelt the ripe pears when they drooped and fell and
broke upon the path.
Old were her thoughts of things of old; her present thoughts
were few and dim;
Her eyes saw not the things she saw; she listened, to no
living breath.

Her youth and prime and autumn time bloomed in her
thought all light and sweet:
No wallflower more of sweet could hold, of sunny light no
marigold.
Fruit on her mind's boughs ripened full, in summer's and
calm autumn's heat:
Then fell, for there came none to pick; but winter came, and
she was old.

Now if her sons come they will find—not her: her empty
garden only,
The wallflower done and snapdragon still swinging with the
greedy bees,
Marigold glittering in the grass, scant foxglove ringing
faintly, lonely,
Close red fruit beading the long boughs and bindweed
wreathing where it please.

A tawny lean cat *Marmalade* slinks like a panther through
the tall
Thin bending grass and watches long a scholar thrush
rehearsing song;

Or children running in the sun hunt and hunt a well lost
ball ;
But most the garden sleeps away the day, but still, when
eves are long,

When eves are long and no moon rises, and nervous, still,
is all the air,
That small stiff figure moves again, silent amid the hushing
grass ;
In the firm-carven lime tree's shade she moves, and meets
her old thoughts there,
Then in the deepening dark is lost, or her light steps un-
noted pass.

Only that careless garden keeps secure her memory though
it sleeps,
And the bright flowers and tyrant weed and tall grass
shaking its loud seed
Less lovely were if wanting her who like a living thought
still creeps
And sees what once she saw and music hears of her living
sons and dead.

THE LIME TREE

THAT lime tree on the distant rising ground
(If it was a lime tree) showed her yellow leaves
Above the renewed green of wet August grass—
First Autumn yellow that on first Autumn eves
Too soon was *found*.

Comfortless lime tree ! Scarce an aspen leaf
Like a green butterfly flitted to the ground ;
There was no sign of Autumn in the grass.
Even the long garden beds their beauty brief—
Their mignonette,

Nasturtium and 'sweet-william' and red stocks,
And clover crouching in the border grass,
And blood-like fuschia, eve's primrose and white phlox
And honeysuckle—waved all their smell and hue
Morn and eve anew.

But that far lime tree yellowing by the oak,
Warning oak, elm and poplar and each fresh tree
Shaking in the south wind delightedly,
And clover in the closeness of the grass,
Warns also me.

And now when all the trees are standing still
Beneath the purple and white of the west sky,
And time is standing still—as stand it will—
That early yellowing lime with palsied fingers
Cannot be still.

DARK CHESTNUT

Thou shaking thy dark shadows down,
Like leaves before the first leaves fall,
Pourest upon the head of night
Her loveliest loveliness of all—
Dark leaves that tremble
When soft airs unto softer call.

O, darker, softer fall her thoughts
Upon the cold fields of my mind,
Weaving a quiet music there
Like leaf-shapes trembling in least wind:
Dark thoughts that linger
When the light's gone and the night's blind.

I see her there beneath your boughs,
Dark chestnut, though you see her not;
Her white face and white hands are clear
As the moon in your stretched arms caught;
But stranger, clearer,
The living shadows of her thought.

LONELY AIRS

Ah, bird singing late in the gloam
While the evening shadow thickens,
And the dizzy bat-wings roam,
And the faint starlight quickens;

And her bud eve's primrose bares
Before night's cold fingers come:
Thine are such lonely airs,
Bird singing late in the gloam!

THE CREEPER

It covered all
The cold east wall,
Its green, thin gold, purple, brown,
And flame running up and down;
Lifting its quiet bosom to every wind that crept
Up the high wall and in its darkness slept.
Then when the wind slept all the creeper turned
To undiminishing fire that burned and burned and burned,

But one black night
(For not in the light
May such treacheries be done)
Came with dishonoured weapon one

And cut the stem just where the branches thin
Their million-leaf'd wild wandering begin :
Cut the firm stem quite through, and so it bled,
And all the million leaves shivered and hung there dead.

The wall how cold,
The house how old
Became when that warm bright fire died,
And the fond wind could no more hide.
And it was strange that so much death could be
From one dark night-hour's darker felony ;
And how the leaves being dead could not cast down
Their colours in bright pools of red and gold and brown.

—It did not die,
But flamed on high
Morn after morn, even when white snow
Covered all brightness, high and low ;
And in the night when the snow glimmered wan
Still beautiful as a fire its brightness shone :
Its million quiet leaves quivering in my mind,
When from no earthly meadows crept the remembered wind.

SMOKE

They stood like men that hear immortal speech
Moving among their branches, and like trees
We stood and watched them, and in our still branches
Echoes of that immortal music stirred.
October days had touched their breasts with light,
With yellow light and red light and wan green ;
And the gray cloud that grew from low to high
Made the warm light more warm, the green more wan.
We stood and watched them and in our still branches
We felt the warm light glow, though now the rain
Was loud upon the leaves.

And standing there
You cried, " O, that sweet smell, where is the fire ?
Where is the fire ? " For sharp upon the rain
The smell came of a wood fire and clung round
Hanging upon our branches, till we saw
No more those lighted trees nor heard the rain—
Knew only the deep echoes and the smell
Of a wood fire that breathed its smoke across
From some near hearth, or undiscovered world.

QUEENS

THE red sun stared unwinking at the East
Then slept under a cloak of hodden gray ;
The rimy fields held the last light of day,
A little tender yet. And I remember
How black against the pale and wintry west
Stood the confused great army of old trees,
Topping that lean, enormous-shouldered hill
With crossing lances shivering and then still.
I looked as one that sees
Queens passing by and lovelier than he dreamed,
With fringe of silver light following their feet,
And all those lances vail'd, and solemn Knights
Watching their Queens as with eyes grave and sweet
They left for the gray fields those airy heights.
Nothing had lovelier seemed—
Not April's noise nor the early dew of June,
Nor the calm languid cow-eyed Autumn Moon,
Nor ruffling woods the greenest I remember—
Than this pale light and dark of cold December.

THE RED HOUSE

On the wide fields the water gleams like snow,
And snow like water pale beneath pale sky,
When old and burdened the white clouds are stooped low.
Sudden as thought, or startled near bird's cry,
The whiteness of first light on hills of snow
New dropped from skiey hills of tumbling white
Streams from the ridge to where the long woods lie ;
And tall ridge-trees lift their soft crowns of white
Above slim bodies all black or flecked with snow.
By the tossed foam of the not yet frozen brook
Black pigs go straggling over fields of snow ;
The air is full of snow, and starling and rook
Are blacker amid the myriad streams of light.
Warm as old fire the Red House burns yet bright
Beneath the unmelting snows of pine and larch,
While February moves as slow, as slow
As Spring might never come, never come March.
Amid such snows, by generations haunted,
By echoes, memories and dreams enchanted,
Firm when dark winds through the night stamp and shout,
Brightest when time silvers the world all about,
That old house called *The Heart* burns, burns, and still
Outbraves the mortal threat of the hanging hill.

THE BEAM

The dead white on the fields' dead white
Turned the peace to misery.
Tall bony trees their wild arms thrust
Into the cold breast of the night.
Brightly the stars shone in their dust.
The hard wind's gust
Scratched like a bird the frozen snow.

Against the dead light grew the gold,
Lifting its beam to that high dust;
The lamp within the hut's small pane
Called the world to life again.
Arms of the trees atremble thrust
Defiance at the cold
Night of narrow shrouding snow.

A human beam, small spear of light,
Lifting its beauty to that high
Indifference of starry dust.
The aching trees were comforted,
And their brave arms more deeply thrust
Into the sky.
Earth's warm light fingered the dead snow.

LAST HOURS

A GRAY day and quiet,
With slow clouds of gray,
And in dull air a cloud that falls, falls,
All day.

The naked and stiff branches
Of oak, elm, thorn,
In the cold light are like men aged and
Forlorn.

Only a gray sky,
Grass, trees, grass again,
And all the air a cloud that drips, drips,
All day.

Lovely the lonely
Bare trees and green grass—
Lovelier now the last hours of slow winter
Slowly pass.

PART III

THE WISH

That you might happier be than all the rest,
Than I who have been happy loving you,
Of all the innocent even the happiest—
This I beseeched for you.

Until I thought of those unending skies—
Of stagnant cloud, or fleckless dull blue air,
Of days and nights delightless, no surprise,
No threat, no sting, no fear;

And of the stirless waters of the mind,
Waveless, unfurrowed, of no living hue,
With dead leaves dropping slowly in no wind,
And nothing flowering new.

And then no more I wished you happiness,
But that whatever fell of joy or woe
I would not dare, O Sweet, to wish it less,
Or wish you less than you.

NOWHERE, EVERYWHERE

Flesh and blood, bone and skin,
Are the house that beauty lives in.
Formed in darkness, grown in light
Are they the substance of delight.

Who could have dreamed the things he sees
In these strong lovely presences—
In cheeks of children, thews of men,
Women's bodies beloved of men ?
Who could have dreamed a thing so wise
As that clear look of the child's eyes ?
Who the thin texture of her hand
But with a hand's touch understand ?
Shaped in eternity were these
Body's miracles, where the seas
Their continuous rhythm learned,
And the stars in their bright order burned.
From stars and seas was motion caught
When flesh, blood, bone and skin were wrought
Into swift lovely liveliness.
Oh, but beauty less and less
Than beauty grows. The cheeks fall in,
Colour dies from the smooth skin,
And muscles slack and bones are brittle ;
Veins and arteries little by little
Delay the tides of the blood :
That is a ditch that was a flood.
Then all but dry bones disappears,
White bones that lie a hundred years
Cheated of resurrection. . . .
Where is that beauty gone ?
Escaped even while we watched it so,
And none guessed the way it would go ?
Only it's fled, and here alone
Lie blood and skin and flesh and bone.
Where is the beauty that was here ?
—Nowhere, everywhere.

TAKE CARE, TAKE CARE

Bind up, bind up your dark bright hair
  And hide the smouldering sunken fire.
Let it be held no more than fair,
Nor yourself guess how rare, how rare
  Its movement, colour and deep fire.

Your eyes they have their consciousness,
  Your lips their grave reflective smile,
Your hands their cunning for distress:
Your hair has only beauteousness
  And hid flame for its only guile.

That glowing hair on shoulders white
  Is pride past sum: take care, take care!
Even to dream of wish'd delight
Too much perturbs the ebb of night—
  Bind up, bind up your burning hair!

NEARNESS

Thy hand my hand,
Thine eyes my eyes,
All of thee
Caught and confused with me:
My hand thy hand
My eyes thine eyes,
All of me
Sunken and discovered anew in thee. . . .

No: still
A foreign mind,
A thought
By other yet uncaught;

A secret will
Strange as the wind :
The heart of thee
Bewildering with strange fire the heart in me.

Hand touches hand,
Eye to eye beckons,
But who shall guess
Another's loneliness ?
Though hand grasp hand
Though the eye quickens,
Still lone as night
Remain thy spirit and mine, past touch and sight.

THE SECOND FLOOD

How could I know, how could I guess
That here was your great happiness—
In mine ? And how could I know
Your love infinite must grow ?

Suddenly at dawn I wake
To see the cruse of colour break
Over the East, and then the gray
Creep up with light of common day. . . .
No, no, no ! again that bright
Flashing, flushing, flooding light
Leading on day, until I ache
With love to see the dark world wake.

O, with such second flood your love
Painted my earth and heaven above,
With such wild magnificence
As bruised my heart in every sense,
In every nerve. Was ever man
Fit this renewed love to sustain ?

Now in these days when Autumn's leaf
Is red and gold, and for a brief
Day the earth flowers ere it dies,
What if Spring came with new surprise
Came ere the aspen shivered bare
Or the beech coins glittered in cold air,
Before the rough wind the maple stripped
And this bare moon on bare boughs stepped!
Vain thought—O, yet not wholly vain:
Even to me Love has come again,
Moving from your quick breast where he
Fluttered in his wondering infancy.

THE GLASS

Your face has lost
The clearness it once wore,
And your brow smooth and white
Its look of light;
Your eyes that were
So careless, are how deep with care!

O, what has done
This cruelty to you?
Is it only Time makes strange
Your look with change,
Or something more
Than the worst pang Time ever bore?—
Regret, regret!
So bitter that it changes
Bright youth to madness,
Poisoning mere sadness. . . .
O, vain glass that shows
Less than the bitterness the heart knows.

BUT MOST THY LIGHT

I KNOW how fire burns,
How from the wrangling fumes
Rose and amber blooms,
And slowly dies.

Nothing's so swift as fire,
There's nothing alive so fierce.
The lifted lances pierce,
Sink, and upspring.

Like an Indian sword it leaps
Out of the smoking sheath.
Even the winged feet of death
Learn speed from fire ;

And pain its cunning learns ;
Languor its sweet
From the decaying heat
That never dies.

I know how fire burns
Unguessed, save for tears,
When the thousand-fanged flame spears
The body's guard ;

Or when the mind, the mind
Is ever-glowing wood,
And fire runs in the blood
Lunatic, blind ;

When remorse burns and burns
And burns always, always—
The fire that surest slays
Or surest numbs.

I know how fire burns,
But how I cannot tell.
And Heaven burns like Hell
Yet the Heart endures.

'Tis the immortal Flame
In mortal life that's bitter,
Or than all sweet sweeter
Though life burns down.

Teach me, fire, but this,
Nor alone destroying burn :—
Of thy warmth let me learn,
But most thy light.

IN THAT DARK SILENT HOUR

In that dark silent hour
When the wind wants power,
And in the black height
The sky wants light,
Stirless and black
In utter lack,
And not a sound
Escapes from that untroubled round :—

To wake then
In the dark, and ache then
Until the dark is gone—
Lonely, yet not alone ;
Hearing another's breath
All the quiet beneath,
Knowing one sleeps near
That day held de ar

And dreams held dear ; but now
In this sharp moment—how
Share the moment's sweetness,
Forgo its completeness,
Nor be alone
Now the dark is grown
Spiritual and deep
More than in dreams and sleep ?

O, it is pain, 'tis need
That so will plead
For a little loneliness.
If it be pain to miss
Loved touch, look and lip,
Companionship
Yet is verier pain
Then, then

In that dark silent hour
When the wind wants power,
And you, near or far, sleep,
And your released thoughts toward me creep
While I, imprisoned, awake,
Ache—ache
To be for one
Long, little moment with myself alone.

ONCE THERE WAS TIME

Let no tears fall
  If then they fell not.
If eyes told nothing,
  Now let them tell not.

Once there was time
  For words, looks and tears :
That time is past, is past—
  Heart, thou shalt tell not !

Beyond any speech
  Is silence bitter,
As between love and love
  Nothing is sweeter.
Once there was time, time yet
  For words, looks and tears. . .
Past, past, past, past—
  Nothing so bitter !

Now if tears come
  That then fell never ;
If eyes such sad, sad things
  Look now for ever ;
If words, looks or tears
  Tremble with telling,
Oh, what returning voice is it whispers
  Never, never, never !

SCATTER THE SILVER ASH LIKE SNOW

O, WHAT insect is it
That burrows in the heart and frets
The heart's near nerves,
Leaving its unclean
Stigmata in the mind serene,
Making the proud how mean ?

It is not common hate,
Anger has not such deadly cunning
To annul, to chill.

Wild anger is not
So cunning even while so hot ;
Hate is too soon forgot.

There is no sword so sharp
With lightnings as the wanton tongue ;
Nothing that burns like words—
Bubbling flames that spread
In the now unspiritual head,
By sleepless fevers fed

O evil words that are
The knives of desolating thought !
And though words be still
The hot eyes yet dart
Burning deaths from this mad heart
Into that torn heart.

O Love, forget, forget,
Put by that glittering edge, put by ;
Slay the insect with light ,
Smother that smoky glow,
Scatter the silver ash like snow
When thy spring airs blow !

JUSTIFICATION

From far-off it came near
Deep-charactered and clear,
Until I saw the features close to mine
And the eyes unhappy shine.

It was Sorrow's face,
Wanting kindness and grace,
And wanting strength of silence, and the pow
To abide a luckier hour.

The first fear turned to hating
As I saw him dumbly waiting,
For it was my true likeness that he wore,
And would wear evermore :—

My face that was to be
When his years' misery
With here a little and there a little had made
My strong spirit afraid.

I saw his face and hated,
Seeing mine so sad-fated.
And then I struck and killed him, knowing that he
Had else slain me.

I HAVE NEVER LOVED YOU YET

I HAVE never loved you yet, if now I love.

If Love was born in that bright April sky
And ran unheeding when the sun was high,
And slept as the moon sleeps through Autumn nights
While those clear steady stars burn in their heights :

If Love so lived and ran and slept and woke
And ran in beauty when each morning broke,
Love yet was boylike, fervid and unstable,
Teased with romance, not knowing truth from fable.

But Winter after Autumn comes and stills
The petulant waters and the wild mind fills
With silence ; and the dark and cold are bitter,
O, bitter to remember past days sweeter.

Then Spring with one warm cloudy finger breaks
The frost and the heart's airless black soil shakes ;
Love grown a man uprises, serious, bright
With mind remembering now things dark and light.

O, if young Love was beautiful, Love grown old
Experienced and grave is not grown cold.
Life's faithful fire in Love's heart burns the clearer
With all that was, is and draws darkling nearer.

I have never loved you yet, if now I love.

THE PIGEONS

THE pigeons, following the faint warm light,
Stayed at last on the roof till warmth was gone,
Then in the mist that's hastier than night
Disappeared all behind the carved dark stone,
Huddling from the black cruelty of the frost.
With the new sparkling sun they swooped and came
Like a cloud between the sun and street, and then
Like a cloud blown from the blue north were lost,
Vanishing and returning ever again,
Small cloud following cloud across the flame
That clear and meagre burned and burned away
And left the ice unmelting day by day.

. . . Nor could the sun through the roof's purple slate
(Though his gold magic played with shadow there
And drew the pigeons from the streaming air)
With any fiery magic penetrate.
Under the roof the air and water froze,
And no smoke from the gaping chimney rose.
The silver frost upon the window-pane

Flowered and branched each starving night anew,
And stranger, lovelier and crueller grew ;
Pouring her silver that cold silver through,
The moon made all the dim flower bright again.

. . . Pouring her silver through that barren flower
Of silver frost, until it filled and whitened
A room where two small children waited, frightened
At the pale ghost of light that hour by hour
Stared at them till though fear slept not they slept.
And when that white ghost from the window crept,
And day came and they woke and saw all plain,
Though still the frost-flower blinded the window-pane,
And touched their mother and touched her hand in vain,
And wondered why she woke not when they woke ;
And wondered what it was their sleep that broke
When hand in hand they stared and stared, so frightened ;
They feared and waited, and waited all day long
While all the shadows went and the day brightened,
All the ill shadows but one shadow strong.

Outside were busy feet and human speech
And daily cries and horns. Maybe they heard,
Painfully wondering still, and each to each
Leaning, and listening if their mother stirred—
Cold, cold,
Hungering as the long slow hours grew old,
Though food within the cupboard idle lay
Beyond their thought, or but beyond their reach.
The soft blue pigeons all the afternoon
Sunned themselves on the roof or rose at play,
Then with the shrinking light fluttered away ;
And once more came the icy hearted moon,
Staring down at the frightened children there
That could but shiver and stare.

. . . How many hours, how many days, who knows ?
Neighbours there were who thought they had gone away
To return some luckier or luckless day.
No sound came from the room : the cold air froze
The very echo of the children's sighs,
And what they saw within each other's eyes,
Or heard each other's heart say as they peered
At the dead mother lying there, and feared
That she might wake, and then might never wake,
Who knows, who knows ?
None heard a living sound their silence break.

In those cold days and nights how many birds
Flittering above the fields and streams all frozen
Watched hungrily the tended flocks and herds—
Earth's chosen nourished by earth's wise self-chosen !
How many birds suddenly stiffened and died
With no plaint cried,
The starved heart ceasing when the pale sun ceased !
And when the new day stepped from the same cold East
The dead birds lay in the light on the snow-flecked field,
Their song and beautiful free winging stilled.

I walked under snow-sprinkled hills at night,
And starry sprinkled skies deep blue and bright.
The keen wind thrust with his knife against the thin
Breast of the wood as I went tingling by
And heard a weak cheep-cheep—no more—the cry
Of a bird that crouched the smitten wood within. . . .
But no one heeded that sharp spiritual cry
Of the two children in their misery,
When in the cold and famished night death's shade
More terrible the moon's cold shadows made.
How was it none could hear
That bodiless crying, birdlike, sharp and clear ?

I cannot think what they, unanswered, thought
When the night came again and shadows moved
As the moon through the ice-flower stared and roved,
And that unyielding Shadow came again.
That Shadow came again unseen and caught
The children as they sat listening in vain,
Their starved hearts failing ere the Shadow removed.
And when the new morn stepped from the same cold East
They lay unawakening in the barren light,
Their song and their imaginations bright,
Their pains and fears and all bewilderment ceased . . .
While the brief sun gave
New beauty to the death-flower of the frost,
And pigeons in the frore air swooped and tossed,
And glad eyes were more glad and grave less grave.

There is not pity enough in heaven or earth,
There is not love enough, if children die
Like famished birds—oh, less mercifully.
A great wrong's done when such as these go forth
Into the starless dark, broken and bruised,
With mind and sweet affection all confused,
And horror closing round them as they go.
There is not pity enough !

And I have made, children, these verses for you,
Lasting a little longer than your breath,
Because I have been haunted with your death ;
So men are driven to things they hate to do.
Jesus, forgive us all our happiness,
As Thou dost blot out all our miseries.

AND THESE FOR YOU

I

NOT WITH THESE EYES

Let me not see your grief!
O, let not any see
That grief,
Nor how your heart still rocks
Like a temple with long earthquake shocks.
Let me not see
Your grief.

These eyes have seen such wrong,
Yet remained cold:
Ills grown strong,
Corruption's many-headed worm
Destroying feet that moved so firm—
Shall these eyes see
Your grief?

And that black worm has crawled
Into the brain
Where thought had walked
Nobly, and love and honour moved as one,
And brave things bravely were begun. . . .
Now, can thought see
Unabashed your grief?

Into that brain your grief
Has run like cleansing fire:
Your grief
Through these unfaithful eyes has leapt
And touched honour where it lightly slept.
Now when I see
In memory your grief

There is no thought that's not
Yours, yours,
No love that sleeps,
No spiritual door that opens not
In the green quiet village of thought
Shining with light,
And silent to your silence.

II

ASKING FORGIVENESS

I DID not say, " Yes, we had better part
Since love is over or must be suppressed."
I did not say, " I'll hold you in my heart
Saint-like, and in the thought of your thought rest,
And pray for you and wish you happiness
In a better love than mine."

I was another man to another woman,
Tears falling or burnt dry were nothing then.
I struck your heart, I struck your mind ; inhuman,
Future and past I stabbed and stabbed again,
Cursing the very thought of your happiness
In another love than mine :

—Then left you sick to death, and I like death.
It was a broken body bore me away—
A broken mind—poisoned by my own breath,
And love self-poisoned. . . . Was it but yesterday ?
—Forgive, forgive, forgive, forgive, forgive,
Forgive !

JUDGMENT DAY

When through our bodies our two spirits burn
Escaping, and no more our true eyes turn
Outwards, and no more hands to fond hands yearn ;

Then over those poor grassy heaps we'll meet
One morning, tasting still the morning's sweet,
Sensible still of light, dark, rain, cold, heat ;

And see 'neath the green dust that dust of gray
Which was our useless bodies laid away,
Mocked still with menace of a Judgment Day.

We then that waiting dust at last will call,
Each to the other's,—" Rise up at last, O small
Ashes that first-love held loveliest of all !

" 'Tis Judgment Day, arise ! " And they will arise,
The dust will lift, and spine, ribs, neck, head, knees
At the sound remember their old unities,

And stand there, yours with mine, as once they stood
Beloved, obeyed, despised, with that swift blood,
Those looks and trembling lips, heart's pause and thud.

. . . . . .

" And was it these that love-galled thought pursued
And with his immortality indued,
Nor was by their mortality quite subdued ?

" This was the bony hand that held my hand,
The shoulders whereon all my world might stand :
They fell, but in their fall was I unmanned ?

" This was the breast my eyes delighted in,
The ribs were faint as now under the skin :
They mouldered, but not my love mouldered within

" Away, away ! This was not truly thee—
A mortal bravery, Time's delinquency,
A dream that held me from thee, thee from me.

" It was not in these bodies that we drew
Near, nearer : never, never by these we knew
Transfusion past all sense of ' I ' and ' You.'

" It was youth's blindness held the body so dear :
Slowly, slowly, year after bewildered year,
The dark thinned and the eyes of love grew clear,

" And thought following thought, enlinking each,
Ran where the delighting body could not reach,
And had speech when there was no voice for speech ;

" So that we scarce grieved when those bodies died,
And our eyes more than our true spirits cried ;
But as when trees fall, the free wind that sighed

" Awhile in their fond branches ceases not,
But sings a moment over the cumbered spot,
Then flies away :—our unentangled thought,

" Our vivid spirits of love, unbroken moved
And lifted no more sense-confined, and roved
And knew till then we had not utterly loved. . .

" Leave now this dust ! "

And then the dust will sink,
The upheaved mound to its old shape will shrink,
And we shall turn again from Time's dusk brink.

. . . . . .

Will it be thus ? It will be thus. Even now,
Though body to body submissively still bow,
'Tis not on body's blood that our loves grow.

Though I am old and you are old, though nerves
Slacken, and beauty slowly lose its curves,
And greedy Time the bone and sinew starves,

Like some lean Captain gloating over a town
That has not fallen, but will fall, every stone
O'erthrust and every bravery overthrown ;

Who entering the defeated walls at last
Finds emptiness, and hears an escaping blast,
Triumphant from the shining east hills cast,

And knows defeat in victory. . . . O that rare
Music is ours, is ours—prelusive air
Caught from the Judgment music high and severe.

Will it indeed be thus ? Yes, thus ! The body burns,
Not with desire, and into pale smoke turns,
And there is only flame towards flame that yearns.

While that ill lecherous Time among the stones
Sits musing and rocking his old brittle bones,
Irked by long shadows, mocked by those bright far tones.

LIGHTING THE FIRE

You were a gipsy as you bent
Your dark hair over the black grate.
Hardly the west light above the hill
Showed your shadow, crooked and still.
The bellows hissed, and one bright spark
Deepened the hasty dark.

The bellows hissed, and the old smell
Crept on the air of smoking peat,
And round the spark a bubbling flame

Grew bright and loud. Sweeping the gloom
Lunatic shadows fled and came
    Whirling about the room.

Then as you raised your head I saw
In the clear light of the bubbling fire
Your dark hair all lined with the gray
Sprinkled by years and sorrow and pain . . .
Till as the bellows idle lay
    Shadow swept back again.

RECOVERY

WHERE are you going with eyes so dull,
You whose eyes were beautiful,
You whose hair with the light was gay,
And now is thin and harsh and gray ?
Is it age alone or age and tears
That has slowly rubbed your beauty away ?

Where were you going when your swift eyes
Were like merry birds under May skies ?—
In your cheeks the colours fluttering brave
As you danced with the wind and ran with the wave.
From what bright star was your brightness caught ?
What to your music the music gave ?

Now is your beauty a thing of old,
The fire is sunken, the ashes cold.
But if sweet singing on your ear stray,
Or the praise is uttered of yesterday,
Or of courage and nobleness one word said—
Like a cloud Time's ravage is brushed away

EYES

A WINTER sky of pale blue and pale gold,
Bare trees, a wind that made the wood-path cold,
And one slow-moving figure, gray and old.

We met where the soft path falls from the wood
Down to the village. As I came near she stood
And answered when I spoke, drawing the hood

Back from her face. I saw only her eyes,
Large and sad. I could not bear those eyes.
They were like new graves. I could not bear her eyes.

But what we said as each passed on is gone.
We looked and spoke and passed like strangers on,
I to the high wood, she towards the paling sun.

And there, where the clear-heavened small pool lies,
And the tallest beeches brush the bending skies,
In pool and tree I saw again her eyes.

PART IV

FULFILMENT

HAPPY are they whom men and women love,
And you were happy as a river that flows
Down between lonely hills, and knows
The pang and virtue of that loneliness,
And moves unresting on until it move
Under the trees that stoop at the low brink
And deepen their cool shade, and drink
And sing and hush and sing again,
Breathing their music's many-toned caress ;
While the river with his high clear music speaks
Sometimes of loneliness, of hills obscure,
Sometimes of sunlight dancing on the plain,
Or of the night of stars unbared and deep
Multiplied in his depths unbared and pure ;
Sometimes of winds that from the unknown sea creep,
Sometimes of morning when most clear it breaks
Spilling its brightness on his breast like rain ;—
And then flows on in loneliness again
Towards the unknown near sea.
  Was it in mere happiness or pain ?
There were things said that spoke of naked pain,
With nothing between the wound and the sharp-edged
    world ;
Things seen that told of such perplexity
As darkened night with night : but was that pain ?

And there were things created all delight,
Making delight fruitful a hundred fold :
Sweetness of earth, energy of sun and rain,
Colour and shape, flowers and grasses bright,
And the clear firm body of a bare lovely hill,
And woods around its feet fast caught and curled,
And the cold sweets of lonely travelled night. . . .
And was that happiness ?—or something more,
That gathered happiness and pain like flowers
Half perished, and let them perish ; and brightened still
In those dark mental journeys of cold hours
That found you what you were and left you stronger,
Shutting a door and opening a door ? . . .
O door that you have passed so quickly through,
Ere we well knew what man you were, nor knew
What you had shown in life but a little longer !
It was not pain nor happiness for you,
Not any named delight or pang of sense,
But swift fulfilment past all sense or thought
Of what you were with all that time could make you ;
No separate gift, spiritual influence,
But something wrought
From your own heart, with all that life could make you.

BRING YOUR BEAUTY

Bring your beauty, bring your laughter, bring even your
fears,
Bring the grief that is, the joy that was in other years,
Bring again the happiness, bring love, bring tears.

There was laughter once, there were grave, happy eyes,
Talk of firm earth, old earth-sweeping mysteries : . .
There were great silences under clear dark skies.

Now is silence, now is loneliness complete ; all is done.
The thrush sings at dawn, too sweet, up creeps the sun :
But all is silent, silent, for all that was is done.

Yet bring beauty and bring laughter, and bring even tears,
And cast them down ; strew your happiness and fears,
Then leave them to the darkness of thought and years

Fears in that darkness die ; they have no spring.
Grief in that darkness is a bird that wants wing. . .
O love, love, your brightness, your beauty bring.

MEMORIAL

The wild October sky
Rises not so high,
The tree's roots that creep
Into the earth's body thrust not so deep
As our high and dark thought.

Yet thought need not roam
Far off to bring you home.
The sky is our wild mind,
Your roots are round our spirits twined,
To ours are your hearts caught.

O, never buried dead !
The living brain in the head
Is not so quick as you
Burning our conscious darkness through
With brightness past our thought.

At evening when the aspens rustled soft
And the last blackbird by the hedge-nest laughed,
And through the leaves the moon's unmeaning face
Looked, and then rose in dark-blue leafless space ;
Watching the trees and moon she could not bear
The silence and the presence everywhere.
The blackbird called the silence and it came
Closing and closing round like smoke round flame.
Into her heart it crept and the heart was numb,
Even wishes died, and all but fear was dumb—
Fear and its phantoms. Then the trees were enlarged,
And from their roundness unguessed shapes emerged,
Or no shape but the image of her fear
Creeping forth from her mind and hovering near.
If a bat flitted it was an evil thing ;
Sadder the trees grew with every shadowy wing—
Their shape enlarged, their arms quivered, their thought
Stirring in the leaves a silent anguish wrought.
" What are they thinking of, the evil trees,
Nod-nodding, standing in malignant ease ?
Something against man's mortal heart was sworn
Once, when their dark Powers were conceived and born ;
And in such fading or such lightless hours
The world is delivered to these plotting Powers."
No physical swift blow she dreaded, not
Lightning's quick mercy ; but her heart grew hot
And cold and hot with uncomprehended sense
Of an assassin spiritual influence
Moving in the unmoving trees. . .
Till, as she stared,
Her eyes turned cowards at last, and no more dared.
Yet could she never rise and shut the door :
Perhaps those Powers would batter at the door,

And that were madness. So *right through the house*
She set the doors all wide when she could arouse
The body's energy to serve the mind.
Then the air would move, and any little wind
Would cleanse awhile the darkness and diminish
Her fear, and the dumb shadow-war would finish.

But it was not the trees, the birds, the moon ;
Birds cease, months fly, green seasons wither soon :
Nature was constant all the seasons through,
Sinister, watchful, and a thick cloud drew
Over the mind when its simplicity
Challenged what seemed with thought of what must be. . . .
She wondered, seeing how a child could play
Lightly in a shady field all day :
For in that golden, brief, benignant weather
When spring and summer calling run together
And the sun's fresh and hot, she saw deep guile
In the sweetness of that unconditioned smile.
Sweetness not sweetness was but indifference
Or wantonness disguised, to her grave sense ;
And if she could have seen the things she felt
She'd looked for darkness, and lit shapes that knelt
Appealing, unregarded, at a high
Altar uprising from the pit to the sky. . . .
Had the trees consciousness, with flowers and clouds
And winds that hung like thin clouds in the woods,
And stars and silence :—had they each a mind
Bending on hers, clear eyes on her eyes blind ?
In the green dense heights—elm, oak, ash, yew or beech
She scarce saw—was there not a brain in each,
An undiscovered centre of *quick nerves*
By which (like man) the tree lives, masters, serves,
Waxes and wanes ? Oppressed her mind would shrink
From thought, and into her trembling body sink.

Something of this had childhood taught her when
Sickly she lay and peered again and again
At gray skies and white skies and void bright blue,
And watched the sun the bare town-tree boughs through,
And then through leafy boughs and once more bare.
Or in the west country's heavy hill-drawn air
Had felt the green grass pushing within her veins,
Tangling and strangling ' and the warm spring rains
Tapping all night upon her childish head :
She shivered, lying lonely on her bed,
With all that life all round and she so weak,
Longing to speak—yet what was there to speak ?
And as she grew and health came and love came
And life was happier, happier, still the same
Inhuman spirit rose whenever she
Held in her thoughts more than her eyes could see.
Behind the happiest hours the dark cloud hung
Distant or nearing, and its chillness flung
On the south meadows of her thought, the fairest
Shrinking in shadow ; aspirations rarest
Falling, like shot birds in a reedy fen,
Slain by the old Enemy of men.
Life ebbed while men strove for the means of life ;
The grudging earth turned labour into strife.
The moving hosts within the heavy clod
Seemed infinite in malice ; frost and flood,
Season and inter-season, were conspired
In smiling or sour mockery ; and untired
And undelighted, man scratched and scratched on,
And what he did, by Nature was undone.
She saw men twisted more than rocks or trees,
Bruised, numbed, by age and labour and the disease
Of labour in the cold fields ; women worn
By many child-bearings, and their self-scorn
Because of time and their lost woman's powers.

Bitter was Nature to women ; for those hours
Of the spirit's and the body's first delight
Passed soon, and the long day, evening, night
Of life uncherished ; bitterest when even
That brief hour was denied, of dancing heaven,
Dewy love, and fulfilled desires.
But age
Of all ills made her pity and anger rage.
To see and smell the calm months bud and bloom,
April's first warmth, June's hues and slow perfume,
The sweetness drifting by in those long hours
While, out of her she nursed, the vital powers
Were pressed by pain and pressed by pain renewed,
Till, closing the life-long vicissitude,
Came starving death with full-heaped summer, and
Wrung the last pangs that spirit could withstand. . .
Or to see age in its prison slowly freeze
With impotence more disastrous than disease,
While trees flowered on, or all the winter through
Upheld brave arms and with spring flowered anew
Above those living graves and graves of the dead ;—
'Twas all such bitterness, but she nothing said.
She saw men as courageous boats that sailed
On all the seas, and some a far port hailed
Perhaps to sail again, or anchor there
Forever ; some would quietly disappear
In stormless waters, and some in storms be broken :
And all be hidden and no clear meaning spoken,
Nor any trace upon the waters linger.
Where the boat went the wind with hasty finger,
Savage and sly as aught of land could be,
Erased the little wrinkling of the sea.
O, in such enmity was man enisled,
Such loneliness, by foolish shades beguiled,
That it was bravery to see and live,

But cowardice to see and to forgive.
The wrong of evil, the wrong of death to life,
The defeat of innocence, the waste of strife,—
The heavy ills of time, injustice, pain—
In field and forest and flood rose huge and plain,
Brushing her mind with darkness, till she thought
Not with her brain, but all her nerves were wrought
Into an apprehension burning strong,
Unslackening, of mortality's old wrong.
But if her eyes she raised to those clear lonely
Altitudes of stars and ether only,
Her eyes fell and rebuked her as forbidden
With human mind to question what was hidden.
At summer dusk the broad moon rising high
Put gentleness in the vast strength of the sky,
Easing its weight ; or the hot summer sun
Made noonday kind, and the hours lightly run.
But in those blazing midnights of the stars
Gathered and brightening for immortal wars
With spears and darts and arrows of sharp light,
She read the indifference of the infinite,
The high strife flashing through eternity
While on the earth stared mortals but as she.

O 'twas a living world that rose around
And in her sentience burned a hollow wound.
Such easy brightness as the poets see,
Or easy gloom, or hues of faerie,
She never saw, but into her own heart peered
To find what spirit indeed it was she feared :—
Whether in antique days a divine foe
Sprung branchlike from dense woods had wrought her woe
Whether in antique days a pagan rite
(Herself a pagan still) unfilmed her sight
And taught her secrets never to be forgot,

And by man's generation pardoned not. . . .
The same blood in ancestral veins ran fleet
As now made hers a road for pain's quick feet.
Into the marrow of her hidden life
Had poured the agony of their ternless strife
With immaterial and material things ;
And as a bird an unlearned music sings
Because a million generations sang,
So in her breast the old alarum rang,
So the old sorrowfulness in her thought
Renewed, and apprehensions all untaught ;
As if indeed a creature primitive
Still did she in the world's dim morning live,
That wanted human warmth and gentleness
To make its solitude a little less

Kindness gave solitude the lovely light
She loved, and made less terrible black midnight.
Even as a bird its unlearned music pours
Though windows all be blind and shut the doors,
And sings on still though no faint sound be heard
But wind and leaves and another lonely bird :
So poured she untaught kindness all around
And in that human music comfort found—
Music her own and music heard from others,
Prime music of all lovers, children, mothers,
Precarious music between all men sounding,
The horror of silent and dark Powers confounding.
Singing that music she could bravely live ;
Hearing it, find less sorrow to forgive.

THE CANDLE

Time like a cloud
Has risen from the East
And whelmed the sky over
Even to the wide-arched West,
Darkening the blue,
Embrowning the early gold,
Until no more the eternal Sun
Looks simply through.

In each man's eyes
The cloud is set,
With but the chill light
Of silver January skies.
On each man's heart
Time's firm shadow falls,
And the mind throws but a candle's beam
On the dark walls.

But on those walls
Man paints his dream
Rejoicing purely
In the faithful candle's beam :
Lives by its beauty,
Pictures his heart's delight,
And with that only beam outbraves
Time's gathering night.

O spiritual flame,
Calm, faithful, bright !
Time may whelm over
All but this candle's light :
Shadow but shadow is ;
Dark though it lies
'Tis blazon'd with man's long-dreamed dreams,
Pierced by his eyes.

OLD FIRES

The fire burns low
Where it has burned ages ago,
Sinks and sighs
As it has done to a hundred eyes
Staring, staring
At the last cold smokeless glow.

Here men sat
Lonely and watched the golden grate
Turn at length black;
Heard the cooling iron crack:
Shadows, shadows,
Watching the shadows come and go.

And still the hiss
I hear, the soft fire's sob and kiss,
And still it burns
And the bright gold to crimson turns
Sinking, sinking,
And the fire shadows larger grow.

O dark-cheeked fire,
Wasting like spent heart's desire,
You that were gold,
And now crimson will soon be cold—
Cold, cold,
Like moon-shadows on new snow.

Shadows all,
They that watched your shadows fall.
But now they come
Rising around me, grave and dumb. . . .
Shadows, shadows,
Come as the fire-shadows go.

And stay, stay,
Though all the fire sink cold as clay,
Whispering still,
Ancestral wise Familiars—till,
Staring, staring,
Dawn's wild fires through the casement glow.

THE CROWNS

CHERRY and pear are white,
Their snows lie sprinkled on the land like light
On darkness shed.
Far off and near
The orchards toss their crowns of delight,
And the sun casts down
Another shining crown.

The wind tears and throws down
Petal by petal the crown
Of cherry and pear till the earth is white,
And all the brightness is shed
In the orchards far off and near,
That tossed by the road and under the green hill;
And the wind is fled.

Far, far off the wind
Has shaken down
A brightness that was as the brightness of cherry or pear
When the orchards shine in the sun.
—Oh there is no more fairness
Since this rareness,
The radiant blossom of English earth—is dead!

THE BRIGHT RIDER

All the night through I drank
Sleep like water or cool cider ;
Life flowed over and I sank
Down below the night of clouds. . . .
Then on a pale horse was rider
Through long brushing woods
Where the owl in silence broods,
Quavers, and is quiet again ;
Where the grass dark and rank
Breathes on the still air its rain.
Rain and dark and green and sound
Closing slowly round
Swept me as I rode,
And rode on until I came
Where a white cold river flowed
Under woods thin and bare
In the moon's long candle flame.
Through the woods the wind crawled
Leviathan, and here and there
Branches creaked and old winds howled
Sick for home.
All the night I saw the river,
As a girl that sees beside her
Love, between fear and fear
Riding, and is dumb.
The white horse turned to cross the river,
But the waters like a wall
Rose and hung dark over all ;
And as they fell the river wider
Wider grew, and sky was bare
Save of the sick candle's stare.
Death the divider
Glittered cold and dark and deep

Under banks of fear.
But that rider
Trembling, bright, rode on,
Trembling and bright rode on
Through green lanes of sleep

TO THE HEAVENLY POWER

When this burning flesh
Burns down in Time's slow fire to a glowing ash;
When these lips have uttered
The last word, and the ears' last echoes fluttered;
And crumbled these firm bones
As in the chemic air soft blackened stones;
When all that was mortal made
Owns its mortality, proud yet afraid,

Then when I stumble in
The broad light, from this twilight weak and thin,
What of me will change,
What of that brightness will be new and strange?
Shall I indeed endure
New solitude in that high air and pure,
Aching for these fingers
On which my assured hand now shuts and lingers?

Now when I look back
On manhood's and on childhood's far-stretched track,
I see but a little child
In a green sunny world-home, there enisled
By another, cloudy world
Of unsailed waters all around him curled,
And he at home content
With the small sky of wonders over him bent:—

Lonely, yet not alone
Since all was friendly being all unknown ,
To-day yesterday forgetting,
And never with to-morrow's sorrow fretting ;
Not seeing good from ill
Since but to breathe and run and sleep was well ;
Asking nor fearing nought
Since the body's nerves and veins held all his thought. . .

Such a child again shall I
Stray in some valley of infinity,
Where infinite finite seems
And nothing more immortal than my dreams ?
Where earthly seasons play
Still with their snows and blossoms and night and day,
And no unsetting sun
Brightens the white cloud and awakes the moon ?

In such half-life's half-light
To cloak with mortal an immortal sight ?
With uninformed desire,
Shorn passion, gentle mind, contented fire,
Ignorant love ; to run
But with the little journeys of the sun,
And at evening sleep
With birds and beasts, and stars locked in the deep ?

But maybe this man's mind
Will leave not its maturity behind,
And nothing will forget
Of all that teased or eased it here, while yet
A mortal dress it wore ;
And these quick-darting thoughts and probings sore
More sharply then will turn ;
And lonelier and yet hungrier the heart burn.

O, I would not forget
Earth is too rich, too dark, too sour, too sweet :—
Nor be divorcèd quite
From the late tingling of the nerves' delight.
Less I would never be
Than the deep-graving years have made of me—
A memory, pulse, mind,
Seed and harvest, a reaper and sower blind.

I shall no more be I
If I forget the world's joy and agony ;
If I forget how strong
Is the assault of scarce-rebukèd wrong.
I shall no more be I
If my ears hear not earth's embittered cry
Perpetual ; and forget
The unrighteous shackles on man's ankle set ;

If no more my heart beat
Quicker because on earth is something sweet ;
I shall no more be I
If the ancestral voices no more sigh
Familiar in my brain,
And leave me to cold silence and its pain,
And the bewildered stare
On an unhomely land in biting air :

If the blood no more vex
The heart with the importunities of sex,
If indeed marriage bind
No more body to body, mind to mind,
And love be powerless, cold,
That once by love's strength only was controlled,
And that chief spiritual force
Be dam'd back and stretch frozen to its source. . . .

To the Heavenly Power I cry,
Foiled by these dreams of immortality,
" Let all be as Thou wilt,
And the foundations in Thy dark mind built ;
Even infinity
Be but imagination's dream of Thee ;
And let thought still, still
Vainly its waves on night's cliff break and spill.

" But, Heavenly Power," I'd cry,
Knowing how, near or far, He still is nigh,
" When this burning flesh
Is burnt away to a little driven ash,
What thing soever shall rise
From that cold ash unseen to unseen skies,
Grant that so much of me
Shall rise as may remember Thy world, and Thee "

SNOWS

Now the long-bearded chilly-fingered winter
Over the green fields sweeps his cloak and leaves
Its whiteness there. It caught on the wild trees,
Shook whiteness on the hedges and left bare
South-sloping corners and south-fronting smooth
Barks of tall beeches swaying 'neath their whiteness
So gently that the whiteness does not fall.
The ash copse shows all white between gray poles,
The oaks spread arms to catch the wandering snow
But the yews—I wondered to see their dark all white,
To see the soft flakes fallen on those grave deeps,
Lying there, not burnt up by the yews' slow fire.
Could Time so whiten all the trembling senses,
The youth, the fairness, the all-challenging strength,

And load even Love's grave deeps with his barren snows ?
Even so. And what remains ?
The hills of thought
That shape Time's snows and melt them and lift up
Green and unchanging to the wandering stars.

THE THORN

The days of these two years like busy ants
Have gone, confused and happy and distressed,
Rich, yet sad with aching wants,
Crowded, yet lonely and unblessed.

I stare back as they vanish in a swarm,
Seeming how purposeless, how mean and vain,
Till creeping joy and brief alarm
Are gone and prick me not again.

The days are gone, yet still this heart of fire
Smouldering, smoulders on with ancient love ;
And the red embers of desire
I would not, oh, nor dare remove !

Where is the bosom my head rested on,
The arms that caught my boy's head, the soft kiss ?
Where is the light of your eyes gone ?—
For now I know what darkness is. . . .

It is the loneliness, the loneliness,
Since she that brought me here has left me here
With the sharp need of her to press
Sudden upon the nerve of fear ;

It is the loneliness that wounds me still,
Shut from the generations that are past,
That with their blood my warm veins fill
And on my spirit their spirit cast;

That haunt me so and yet how strangely keep
Beyond communion, alone, alone,
Like that huge ancient hill asleep,
With to-day's noisy winds o'erblown.

There from the hill is sprung a single thorn,
Wind-twisted, straining from the earth to the skies,
Thin branches pleading with wild morn
And root that pressed in darkness lies.

From the unknown of earth and heaven are brought
Her strength, her weakness, death and bravest life;
Shadow and light and wind have wrought
Beauty from change, calm out of strife.

That tree upon the unchanging hill am I,
Alone upon the dark unwhispering hill:—
You in the stirless cold past lie,
But I ache warm and lonely still.

There's not a storm tossing among my boughs,
Nor gentle air drawn under quiet skies,
There's not an idle cloud that flows
Across the mind, nor bird that cries,

But says (if I have eyes, or ears to hear),
"You in this mortal being are alone."
And morn and noon and night-stars clear
Repeat, "Alone, alone, alone."

Yet the tree in wild storm her dark boughs shakes,
Thrusting her roots in the earth, her arms to heaven,
Fresh washed with dew when morning breaks;
And new light back to the light is given

Is it that I that loved have yet forgot?
Is it that I that looked have yet been blind?
Longing, have yet remembered not
Nor heard you whispering in my mind?

But at a word you are nearer now than when
We sat and spoke, or merely looked and thought,
Knowing all speech superfluous then,
Since what we needed, silence brought;—

And your warm bosom my head rested on,
The arms that caught my boy's head, the soft kiss,
The brown grave eyes that gently shone—
Are here again, and brightness is.

Two years have gone, but nearer now are you,
Being dearer now; and this false loneliness
Is but a dream that cloudlike grew,
Then growing cloudlike less and less

Passes away, leaving me like the tree
Bright with the sun and wind and lingering dew;
Homely is all the world for me
Being sweeter with the sense of you.

CHANGE

Just as this wood, cast on the snaky fire,
Crushes the curling heads till smoke is thickened
And the ash sinks beneath the billet's weight,
And then again the hissing heads are quickened :
Just as this wood, by fretful fangs new stung,
Glows angrily, then whitens in the grate
And slowly smouldering smoulders away,
And dies defeated every famished tongue
And nothing's left but a memory of heat
And the sunk crimson telling warmth was sweet :
Just as this wood, once green with Spring's swift fire
Dies to a pinch of ashes cold and gray . . .
Just as this wood——

BEYOND THE BARN

I rose up with the sun
And climbed the hill.
I saw the white mists run
And shadows run
Down into hollow woods.

I went with the white clouds
That swept the hill.
A wind struck the low hedge trees
And clustering trees,
And rocked in each tall elm.

The long afternoon was calm
When down the hill
I came, and felt the air cool,
The shadows cool ;
And I walked on footsore,

Saying, " But two hours more,
Then, the last hill . . .
Surely this road I know,
These hills I know,
All the unknown is known,

" And that barn, black and lone,
High on the hill—
There the long road ends,
The long day ends,
And travelling is over." . . .

Nor thought nor travelling's over.
Here on the hill
The black barn is a shivering ruin,
A windy cold ruin.
I must go on and on,

Where often my thought has gone,
Up hill, down hill,
Beyond this ruin of Time ;
Forgetting Time
I must follow my thought still.

LET HONOUR SPEAK

Let Honour speak, for only Honour can
End nobly what in nobleness began.
Nor hate nor anger may, though just their cause,
This strife prolong, if Honour whisper, Pause !
Let Honour speak.
For Honour keeps the ashes of the dead,
Accounts the anguish of all widowhead,

All childlessness, all sacrifice, defeat,
And all our dead have died for, though to live was sweet.
Let Honour speak,
Nor weariness nor weakness murmur, Stay!
Nor for this *Now* England's *To be* betray.
All else be dumb, for only Honour can
End nobly what in nobleness began.

TALK

So many were there talking that I heard
Nothing at first quite plain, as I sat down;
Until from this man's gibe and that keen word,
Another's chilly smile or peevish frown,
I caught their talk—but added none of mine,
They said how she still fumbled with her fate,
How she had banished visitants divine,
How long her sleep had been, her sloth how great,
How others had drawn near and passed her by,
While she luxuriously had dreamed, dreamed on,
She, she her own eternal enemy,
And wanting brain, brain, brain would be undone.
The glasses tinkled as they talked and laughed,
And if the door a moment hung ajar
The noises of the street, remotely soft,
Crept in as from a world sunken afar.
And still they talked, and then well pleased were pleased
To talk of other things—another's wife,
Money that ministers to a mind diseased,
And queer extravagant whims of death and life. . . .
But I rose up, flushed at the careless slander,
Heedless what other laughing things were said,
And my bruised thoughts began to lift and wander

Far off, as from that jargoning I fled.
I saw the sharp green hills, the silver clouds
At rest upon the hills, the silver streams
Creeping between prone shoulders of dark woods.
I saw wide marshlands laved with level beams
Of the last light ; I saw ships on the sea
That foamed hard by, stinging the fretful shore ;
I smelt old ships on the deserted quay
That English sailors sailed, and will no more ;
I thought of men I loved, and of dead men
I had longed to know—and each heroic ghost
Rose and moved on, and left me alone again
Aching for love and splendour glimpsed and lost.

God knows what things I thought when anger broke
Her narrow dam and swept my spirit clean.
Yet I for very shame not a word spoke,
But to my heart's heart caught the things I had seen,
And *England, England !* murmuring, stood and stared,
Swept like a lover with sweet influence
In brain and bone—and happy that I had spared
Her nobleness the indignity of defence.

THE UNDYING

In thin clear light unshadowed shapes go by
Small on green fields beneath the hueless sky.
They do not stay for question, do not hear
Any old human speech : their tongue and ear
Seem only thought, for when I spoke they stirred not
And their bright minds conversing my ear heard not.
—Until I slept or, musing, on a heap
Of warm crisp fern lay between sense and sleep

Drowsy, still clinging to a strand of thought
Spider-like frail and all unconscious wrought.
For thinking of that unforgettable thing,
The war, that spreads a loud and shaggy wing
On things most peaceful, simple, happy and bright,
Until the spirit is blind though the eye is light;
Thinking of all that evil, envy, hate,
The cruelty most dark, most desolate;
Thinking of the English dead—" How can you dead,"
I muttered, " with your life and young joy shed,
How can you but in these new lands of life
Relume the fiery passion of old strife—
Just anger, mortal hate, the natural scorn
Of men true-born for all things foully born? "
For I had thought that not death's touch could still
In man's clean spirit the hate of good for ill.

But now to see their shapes go lightly by
On those vast fields, clear 'neath the hueless sky,
With not one furious gesture, and (when seen
With but the broad dark hedgerow space between)
No eye's disdain, no thin drawn face of grief,
But pondering calm or lightened look and brief
Smile almost gay;—yet all seen in the air
That driv'n mist makes unreal everywhere—
" So strange," I breathed, " How can you English dead
Forget them for whose life your life was shed? "

It was no voice that answered, yet plain word
Less plain is than the unspoken that I heard,
As I lay there on the dry heap of fern
And watched them pass, mix, disappear and return,
And felt their mute speech into empty senses burn:
" Earth's is the strife. The Heavenly Powers that sent
The gray globe spinning in the firmament,

The Heavenly Powers that soon or late will stay
The spinning, as a child that tires of play,
And globe by spent globe put forgot away
In some vast airless hollow : could they see
Or seeing endure immortal misery
Made out of mortal, and undying hate
Earth's perishing agonies perpetuate ?
O spirits unhappy, if from earth men brought
The mind's disease, the sickness of mad thought !
Sooner the Heavenly Powers would let them lie
Eternally unrising 'neath a sky
Arctic and lonely, where death's starven wind
Raged full-delighted :—sooner would those kind
Serenities man's generation cast
Back into nothingness, than heaven should waste
With finite anguish infinitely prolonged
Until the Eternal Spring were stained and wronged.
O, even the Heavenly Powers at such a breath
From mortal shores would fade and fade to death."

—Was it a voice or but a thought I heard,
Mine or another's, in my boughs that stirred
Waking the leafy darkness of the mind ?
Was it a voice, or but a new-roused wind
That answered—" O, I know, I know, I know !
The oldest rivers into the full sea flow
And there are lost : so everything is lost,
On midnight waves into oblivion tost.
Yet—the high passion, the pity, the joy and pride,
The righteousness for which these men have died,
The courage, the uncounted sacrifice,
The love and beauty, all that's beyond all price ;
That this, the immortal heart of mortal man,
Should be—O tell me what, tell me again, again—
Petals lost on the river of the years

When April sweetness pauses, fades and disappears !
That this high Quarrel should be quenched in death
As some vexed petty plaint unworthy breath ;
That the blood and the tears should never rise
Renewed, accusing in grave judgment skies . . .
Tell me again—O, rather tell me not
Lest that ill telling never be forgot."

And then I rose from that warm ferny heap
And my thoughts climbed from the abyss of sleep.
No more in human guise did cloud-shapes pass,
Nor sighed with sad intelligence the grass.
I saw the hueless sky break into blue,
And I remembered how that heaven I know
When, a small child, I gazed at the great height,
And thought of nothing but the blue and white,
Pools of sweet blue swimming in fields of light.
And as tired men from mine and stithy turn
While still the midnight fires unslackened burn
Flushing their road, and so reach home and then
Dream of old childhood's days and dream again ;
So I forgot those inward fires and found
Old happiness like dew lying all around.
Under the hedge I stood and far below
Saw on the Worcester Plain the swift clouds flow
Like ships on seas no greener than the Plain
That shone between October sun and rain ;
And thinking how time's plenteousness would bring
Back and more bright the young delicious Spring,
Between wet brambles thrust my hand, and tasted
Ripe berries on neglected boughs that wasted.

THE NATIVE COUNTRY

WHERE is that country? The unresting mind
Like a lapwing nears and leaves it and returns.
I know those unknown hill-springs where they rise,
I know the answer of the elms to the wind
When the wind on their heaving bosom lies
And sleeps. I know the grouping pines that crown
The long green hill and fling their darkness down,
A never-dying shadow, and well I know
How in the late months the whole wide woodland burns
Unsmoking, and the earth hangs still as still.
I know the town, the hamlets and the lone
Shelterless cottage where the wind's least tone
Is magnified, and his far-flung thundering shout
Brings near the incredible end of the world. I know!
Even in sleep-walk I should linger about
Those lanes, those streets sure-footed, and by the unfenced
stream go,
Hearing the swift waters past the locked mill flow.
Where is that country? It lies in my mind,
Its trees and grassy shape and white-gashed hill
And springs and wind and weather; its village stone
And solitary stone are in my mind;
And every thought familiarly returns
To find its home, and birdlike circling still
Above the smouldering beeches of November
And the bare elms and rattled hedgerows of December.
That native country lies deep in my mind
For every thought and true affection's home.
And like that mental land are you become,
Part of that land, and I the thought that turns
Towards home. And as in that familiar land I find
Myself among each tree, spring, road and hill,
And at each present step my past footsteps remember;

So in you all my inward being lies,
In you my history, my earth and stream and skies.
Your late fire is it that in my boughs yet burns,
Your stone that to my passing footfall cries.

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